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OLUME 7 • ISSUE 3
ARCH 1999





9 PAGES OF SONIC ADVENTURE!

Street Fighter Zero 3 Secrets Revealed!!

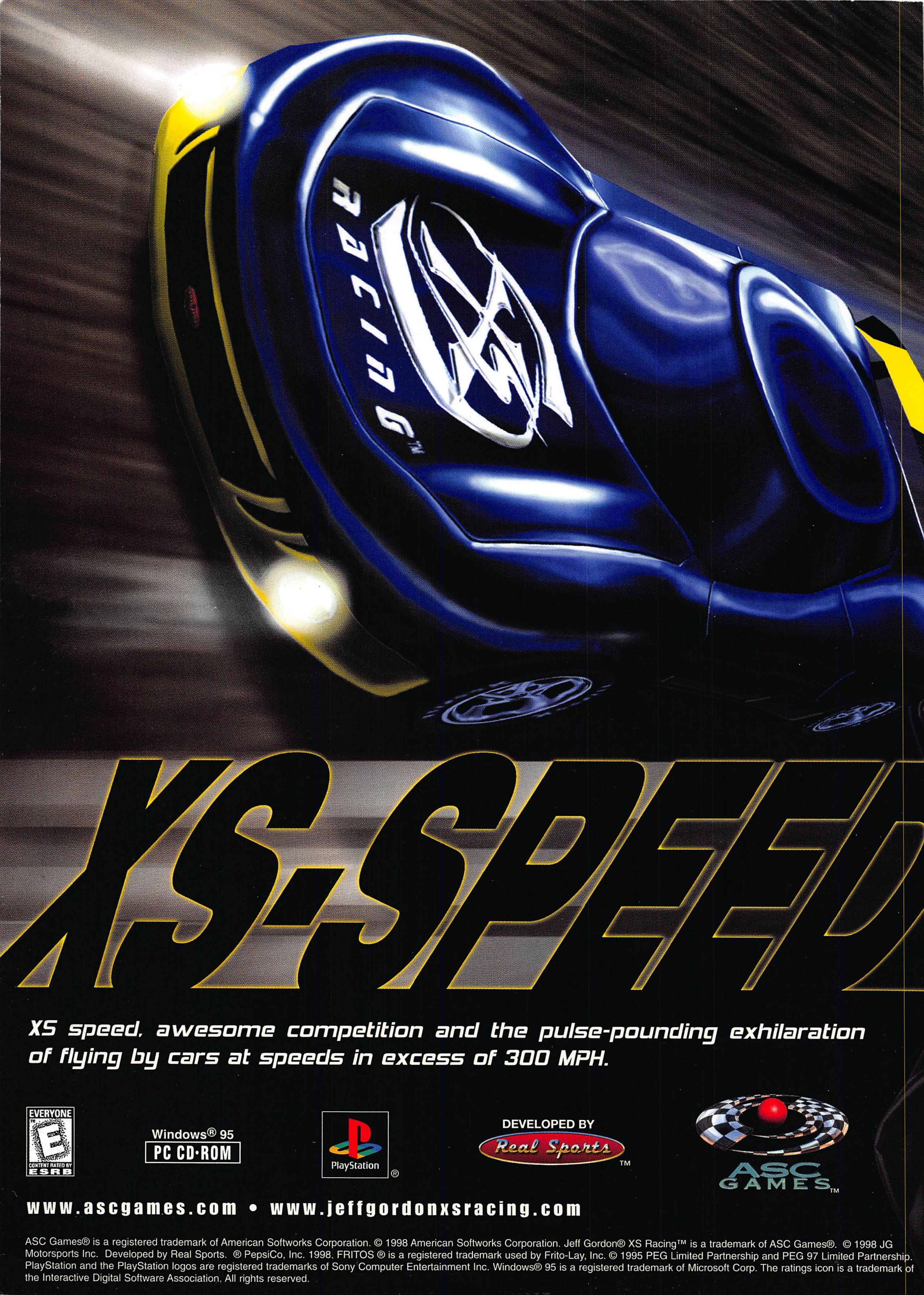
Syphon Filter Strikes! 989's Metal Gear Solid Killer

RPG Power! Legend of Legaia Thousand Arms

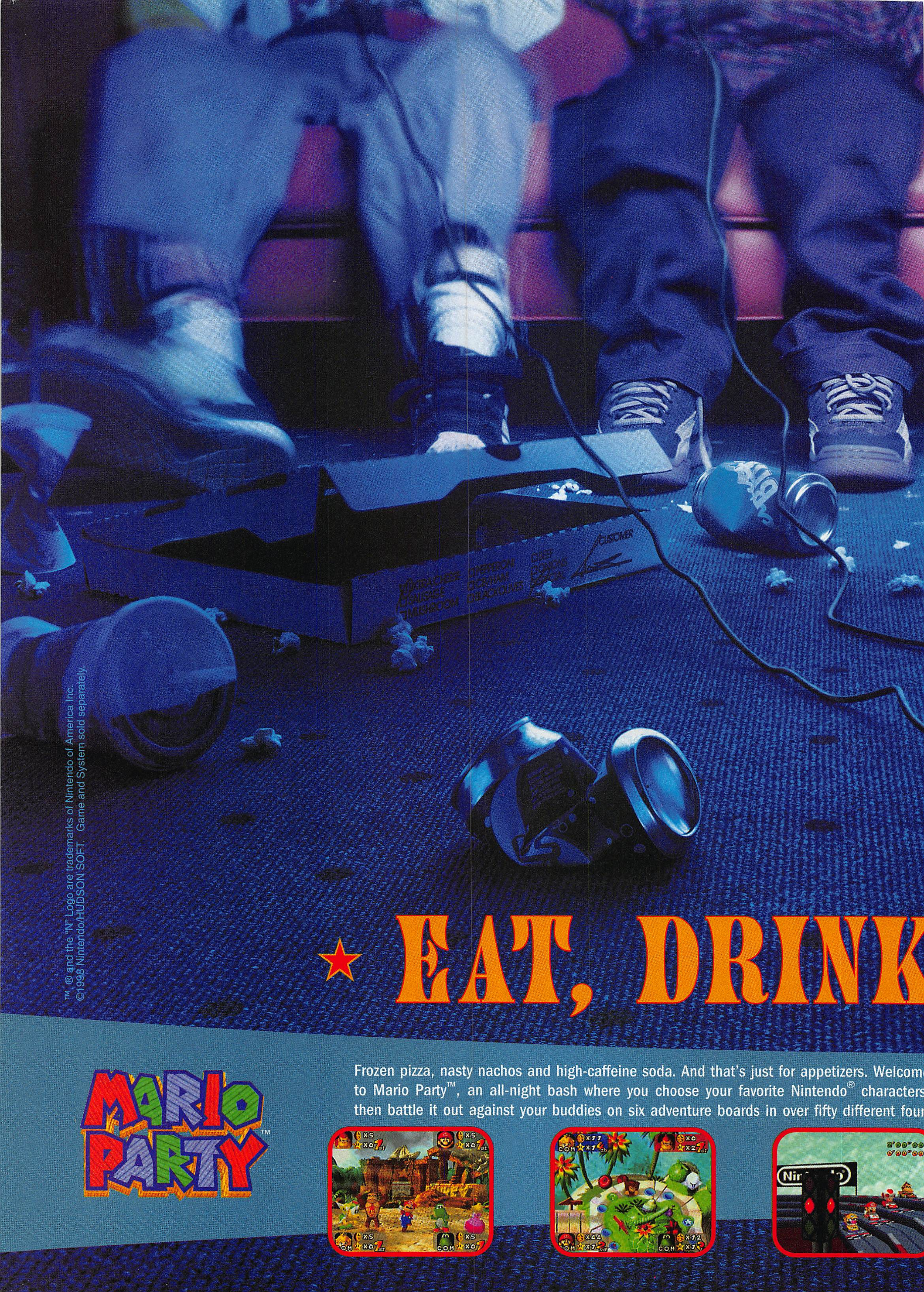


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Ed Zone



We didn't know what to expect going into our return-to-the-stands January issue: ecstasy or apathy on the part of our loyal-to-the-death-and-beyond fan base (the phrase 'die-hard' has never been so apt). Apparently we needn't have worried, as the "Zelda" issue (Vol. 7, Issue 1) has flown off the shelves at record speeds, causing numerous life-threatening paper cuts in the process. I'd like to (once again) thank all the folks that stood by us in the interim, and we promise that we'll do everything we can to keep delivering the kind of mag the enthusiast gamer expects (and deserves) **each** and **every** month. Now, on to other items of potential interest (actually, me ranting for the next couple of paragraphs)...

"there is a large contingent of developers that do not receive the recognition they so rightly deserve"

In the past, certain developers have generally received the lion's share of attention when it came to 'legendary status.' Names like Shigeru Miyamoto, Yu Suzuki, Yuji Naka and even Dave Perry (to a lesser extent) are names the hard-core instantly recognize for their tremendous contributions to the gaming industry (just look at their bodies of work). GameFan is in part responsible (much more than most realize) for making these gentleman household names, and while we're glad that this exclusive club receives all that is their due, there is a large contingent of developers that do not receive the recognition they so rightly deserve.

To that end, we've made the decision that the gaming firmament needs some new stars to complement that hoary host. Over the next twelve months we're going to do our best to bring to your attention some of the more obscure members of the gaming scene whose contributions have been as great as the aforementioned 'legendary' figures. Pretty soon, names like Ed Anunziata (And Now), Nick Jones (Visual Concepts), Doug TenNapel (The Neverhood), Nick Bruty (Planet Moon), Jeff Minter (Llamasoft), Hironobu Sakaguchi ('The Guch' to fans like Eggo) and others will join that elite, 'legendary' club (think of it as the videogame version of the NFL's Quarterback Club). Look to next issue for the first push in that direction.

As for this issue, well, we've certainly put together a pretty nice spread for you to salivate over (that's putting it **very** mildly): The unveiling of Crave's dual-RPG assault with *Shadow Madness* and the exclusive first look at Genki's *Jade Cocoon*, which promises to be the big RPG till the curtain raises on *FFVIII*; the arrival of one of the greatest games ever made in *Sonic Adventure* for Dreamcast; Konami's *Hybrid Heaven* (the game Teeter says is better than *Metal Gear Solid*) and the 'survival horror' antics of *Silent Hill*; more RPG mania with Atlus' *Thousand Arms* and Sony's *Legaia*; all that and Capcom's *piece de resistance*, *Street Fighter Zero 3*. The way I see it, things don't get much better than this, especially given the usually-dead time of year when this issue will hit your happy little mitts.

Next month, we dive face-first into the console exploits of *Quake 2*, more Dreamcast mania with *Sega Rally 2*, *Sengoku-Turb*, *Seventh Cross*, *Evolution*, and—drumroll please—the first and only review of Square's latest triumph, *Final Fantasy VIII*, you'll ever need to read courtesy of the biggest Squarehead ever, Eggo—yes, even bigger than Nick Rox and Takuhi. As well a number of GF-exclusives that, unfortunately, must remain anonymous till then (we figure you'll be quite happy with the results). Till then, keep the letters, art, and email flowing—we never get enough! ***ECM***

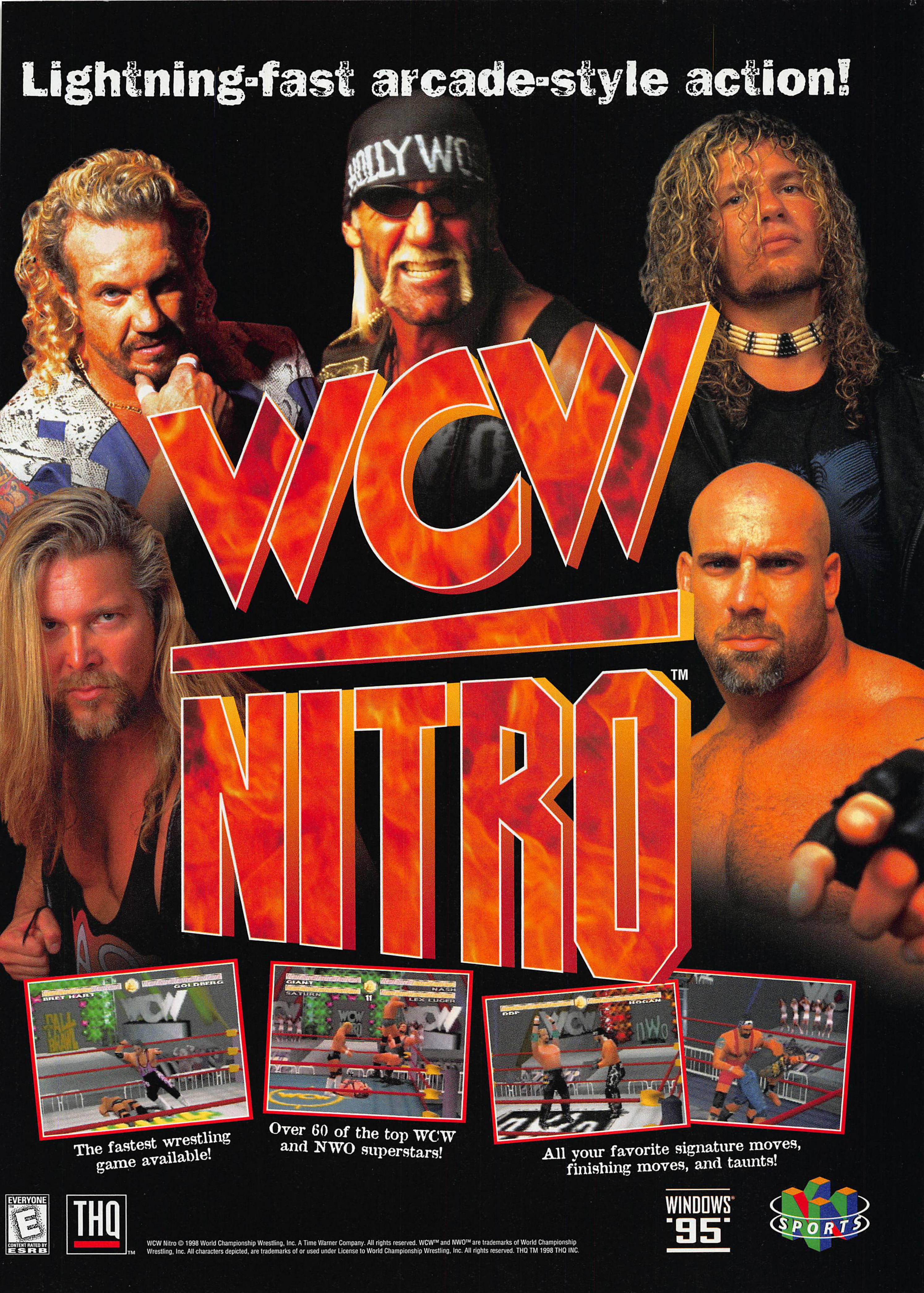
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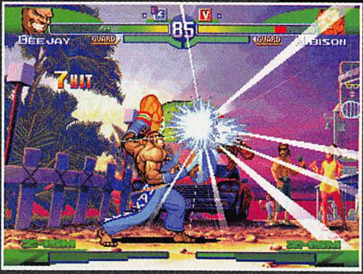
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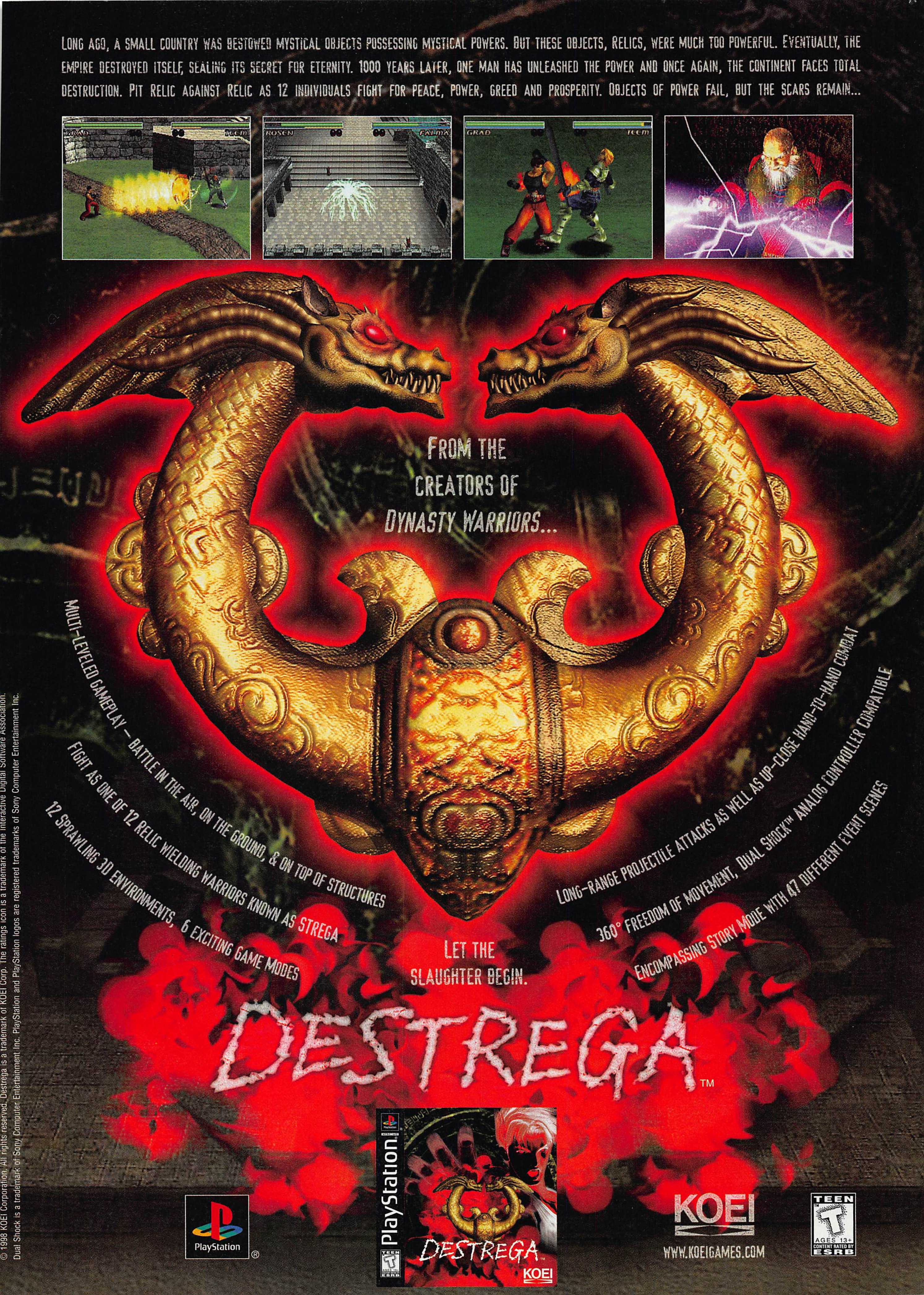












LONG AGO, A SMALL COUNTRY WAS BESTOWED MYSTICAL OBJECTS POSSESSING MYSTICAL POWERS. BUT THESE OBJECTS, RELICS, WERE MUCH TOO POWERFUL. EVENTUALLY, THE EMPIRE DESTROYED ITSELF, SEALING ITS SECRET FOR ETERNITY. 1000 YEARS LATER, ONE MAN HAS UNLEASHED THE POWER AND ONCE AGAIN, THE CONTINENT FACES TOTAL DESTRUCTION. PIT RELIC AGAINST RELIC AS 12 INDIVIDUALS FIGHT FOR PEACE, POWER, GREED AND PROSPERITY. OBJECTS OF POWER FAIL, BUT THE SCARS REMAIN...
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Top 10 Most Wanted



READERS' TOP TEN

1) *Zelda: OOT* - N64
2) *Turok 2: SoE* - N64
3) *Rogue Squadron* - N64
4) *South Park* - N64
5) *Xenogears* - PS
6) *Crash 3: Warped* - PS
7) *Metal Gear Solid* - PS
8) *WCW/NWO Revenge* - N64
9) *GoldenEye* - N64
10) *Tomb Raider 3* - PS

1 READERS' TOP TEN
ZELDA: OOT
N64

READERS' MOST WANTED

1) *Castlevania 64* - N64
2) *Sonic Adventure* - DC
3) *SF Alpha 3* - PS
4) *Final Fantasy VIII* - PS
5) *Soul Reaver* - PS



6) *RE Code Veronica* - DC
7) *Silent Hill* - PS
8) *Perfect Dark* - N64
9) *Shen Mue* - DC
10) *Mario Party* - N64

GAMEFAN EDITORS' TOP TEN

* IMPORT TITLE



1. *Sonic Adventure** - DC
2. *Snowboard Kids 2* - N64
3. *Radiant Silvergun** - SS
4. *House of the Dead 2* - Arcade
5. *ShockTrooper 2* - Arcade
6. *Devil Dice* - PS
7. *Syphon Filter* - PS
8. *Turok 2* - N64
9. *Chakhan* - Genesis
10. *Ecco 2* - Sega CD



1. *VOOT(Virtual On 2)* - Arcade
2. *Tales of Phantasia** - PS
3. *SF Zero 3** - PS
4. *Sonic Adventure** - DC
5. *ShockTrooper 2* - Arcade
6. *Last Blade 2* - Arcade
7. *Virtua Fighter 3 tb** - DC
8. *EV Overdrive* - Mac
9. *Sonic 2* - Genesis
10. *Angband 2.8.3* - PC



1. *SF Zero 3** - PS
2. *StarCraft: Brood War* - PC
3. *Zelda: OOT* - N64
4. *Sonic Adventure** - DC
5. *King of Fighters 98* - NeoGeo
6. *Super Castlevania 4* - SNES
7. *Tetris 64* - N64
8. *GoldenEye* - N64
9. *Hybrid Heaven* - N64
10. *Quake 2* - PC



1. *Diablo* - PC
2. *Dynamite Headdy* - Genesis
3. *SF Zero 3** - PS
4. *Silent Hill* - PS
5. *Lightening Force* - Genesis
6. *StarCraft: Brood War* - PC
7. *Zelda: OOT* - N64
8. *Global Gladiators* - Genesis
9. *Shadowrun* - Genesis
10. *Beach Head* - C64



1. *Sonic Adventure** - DC
2. *SF Zero 3** - PS
3. *Incoming** - DC
4. *Virtua Fighter 3 tb** - DC
5. *Ehrgeiz* - PS
6. *Zelda: OOT* - N64
7. *Abe's Exoddus* - PS
8. *Daytona 2: BOTE* - Arcade
9. *Rogue Squadron* - N64
10. *Carnevil* - Arcade



1. *Syphon Filter* - PS
2. *Brigandine* - PS
3. *Parasite Eve* - PS
4. *NHL '99* - PS
5. *Shadowrun* - Genesis
6. *Civilization 2: Gold* - PC
7. *Baldur's Gate* - PC
8. *Populous* - PC
9. *Roll Away* - PS
10. *NBA Live '99* - PS

WIN

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Second Prize: Your choice of one of the Picks of the Month in Viewpoint.

Third Prize: A FREE year of GameFan! The best magazine in the universe!

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Richmond, VA	San Diego, CA	Belmont, CA

Drawing is limited to One (1) entry per person per month. Drawings will be held on the 21st of each month. The three (3) winners will be notified by mail and listed on this page. For a complete list of rules and regulations write: GameFan Top Ten with self addressed & stamped envelope.

DEVELOPER'S TOP TEN

This Month's Guest:
Gail Salamanca
Product Specialist, Atlus Co., Ltd.

1. *Street Fighter Zero 3** - PS
2. *Zelda* - N64
3. *Age of Empires* - PC
4. *Tron* - Arcade
5. *Tribes* - PC
6. *Half Life* - PC
7. *Blitz* - N64
8. *WCW/NWO Revenge* - N64
9. *Pokemon* - GB
10. *Vampire Saviour* - SS





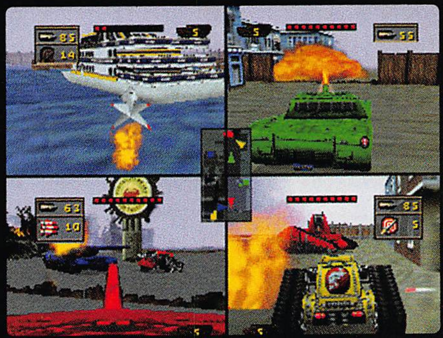




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VIEWPOINT

Legend
Graphics
Control
Play mechanics
Music
Originality



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Syphon Filter
GAME OF THE MONTH!

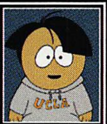


Bomberman Fantasy Race
PlayStation
Atlus



I am Bomberman. That being said, this is yet another attempt by Hudson to milk the cow till its udders are so chapped and raw that you'll be drinking strawberry milk for the next few months (got blood?). More tired 'cart' racing action in a genre that's ready to be put to sleep, it's a good thing Atlus has titles like *Thousand Arms* and *SBK2* coming down the pike in short order—avoid this like Reubus after 3 days of 'crunch time'. That boy needs a shower...<ick>.

G 7 | C 5 | P 5 | M 5 | O 5 | **69**



Mario Kart on the PlayStation? Yeah, why not, right? If our little Bomberhero is going to the race track, he might as well emulate one of the cutest racers around. Green dinosaurs, pink rabbits, triple bombs, rocket-propelled-heat-seeking bombs, and most importantly... fun. That's what BFR is. Too bad I couldn't powerslide worth a Bomberdime, or my score for this would be higher. The best *Bomberman* on the PlayStation! ...a definite rental.

G 7 | C 7 | P 8 | M 8 | O 6 | **83**

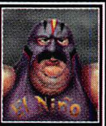


Ya know... I don't ask for much. VOOT machines in the US, a new Porsche, and... oh yeah, HOW 'BOUT A GOOD BOMBERMAN TITLE ON THE PS? Instead, we get a Bomberman racing game??! Well, I'll take it anyway it comes, though control can be an issue especially when making those tight turns around corners. Sure, there's all those *Bomberman* trademarks, and some nifty anime sequences, but if you want a good multiplayer game, there's a lot better.

G 7 | C 6 | P 7 | M 8 | O 7 | **80**



Civilization 2
PlayStation
Activision



Oh, the pain! *Civ 2* is one of the greatest games ever conceived and anyone who plays it is in for a major treat. This version, however, is an abomination. Long load times, abysmal graphics and weak sound make it impossible to enjoy the gameplay (which is intact, incidentally). The lack of analog support makes navigating the screen tedious. If you have never played *Civ 2*, don't make this your first time — it'd be like drinking some of ECM's 'strawberry' milk.

G 3 | C 5 | P 6 | M 4 | O 7 | **50**



When I first heard the cries of anguish coming from El Niño's corner, my initial reaction was, "It's not that bad." The graphics look good from afar. But under close scrutiny, they're far from good. Is that brown, pixelly thing a Settler or a Warrior? Ack!! Going into battle with the townsfolk, and trying to irrigate the land with a spear-wielding buffoon... that's trouble. If you want to play a good game of *Civilization*, do it on a friend's PC, not on the PlayStation.

G 4 | C 6 | P 8 | M 6 | O 7 | **62**



Wow... I didn't think you could make *Civilization* look any worse than it was, but BOY, was I wrong. Undetailed characters, long loading, pixellation beyond belief and washed-out colors. *Civilization 2* plays fine, but unless you can actually keep your eyes on the screen this is one game that you don't need to have. I can't imagine many people actually playing a broken PlayStation version when the PC version of *Civilization 2* is more.. er... um... civilized.

G 4 | C 7 | P 7 | M 6 | O 7 | **58**

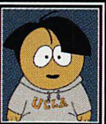


Global Domination
PlayStation
Psygnosis



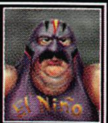
The PC rev of this game is pretty nice, since it contains a very solid multi-player aspect. Alas, this got diced on the PS (no surprise there), and in the process stripped most of the play out of the game. Sure, the James Bond-esque gameplay (no shocks, though) is a nice change of pace on the system, but it just won't fly without at least another player. A good concept that should have stayed in PC-land and not braved the fickle console waters.

G 6 | C 7 | P 6 | M 5 | O 9 | **73**



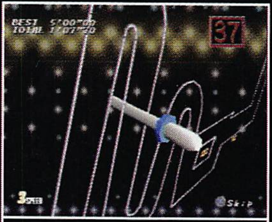
I just don't get it. I don't see why anyone would ever want to play a game like this. There's just no gameplay... no fun... no graphics... where do I begin? I don't even find this game "amusing" as Niño puts it. Maybe amusing when I have guests over, and I tell them to set their drinks down on the *Global Domination* coasters. PC game or not, this one should've been killed early. You want to play *Missile Command* in the '90s? Play the Atari 2600 version, not this!

G 5 | C 5 | P 4 | M 7 | O 8 | **60**



What the hell is going on in this game!? A kind of hybrid between *Missile Command*, *Norad* and that game Connery plays against Klaus Maria Brandauer in *Never Say Never Again*, *Global Domination* is a frenetic look at long-range warfare. The fast pace and marginal difficulty will please some, but I fear most of you (like me) will only find this game amusing for an hour or two. This game should be classified as a rental, only.

G 7 | C 8 | P 6 | M 6 | O 8 | **69**



Irritating Stick
PlayStation
Jaleco



Never, in all the history of gaming, has there been such an aptly named game. Gameplay? GAMEPLAY? There isn't any, and no amount of justifying is gonna change my mind. You guide a ball (er, stick) through rails... through RAILS!! There's nothing else... nothing!! Sure, those backgrounds are fantastic, but even they can't cover the fact that there isn't any real gameplay here. You'll either love it or loathe it... me, I'd rather have some 'strawberry' milk... mmmmm.

G 8 | C 8 | P 2 | M 8 | O 10 | **50**



Back! Back, you dogs! Don't listen to the tasteless fiends to either side of me. There are people in the office who actually like *Irritating Stick*. While it's not a must-buy, rent it. Who knows? You might join the *IS* fan club, with the rest of us who doesn't think a game needs complex gameplay to be good. In case you're wondering, it's like the board game Operation — move a stick through a course w/o hitting the rails... not exactly rocket science, but fun nonetheless.

G 7 | C 8 | P 7 | M 7 | O 9 | **81**

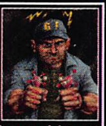


This game blows like the wind, bro! Yeah that's right, ain't nothing fun about this game except maybe using the ROM for target practice...PULL! Got to hand it to the developers though... they pulled it off and created a game that parents can use to actually turn their kids off from playing video games! Times like this I'll either turn to a good book or a shotgun. Now where's those darn shells? Or better yet, how 'bout a nice glass of ECM's own 'strawberry' milk...

G 6 | C 6 | P 4 | M 6 | O 10 | **45**



Nectaris
PlayStation
Jaleco



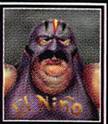
Let me make this crystal clear: In the early days of the TG-16 one of the best games going was *Military Madness* of which *Nectaris* is a descendant. Now, while it was fantastic in its day, porting it over to PS virtually unchanged is not what the general ordered. While I can look past the utilitarian graphics, I can't get beyond the same gameplay that I enjoyed years ago. Some games age like a fine wine, others, well, mold like Waka's feet after some serious, uh, eating.

G 6 | C 7 | P 6 | M 8 | O 9 | **72**



Why it takes so long to port games from Japan makes no sense to me. Why anyone would port *Nectaris*, a mediocre strategy game that is nearly a year old, to the US is also beyond my large cranium. The graphics are a bit too old, and the gameplay, while existent, doesn't keep me coming back for more. With better strategy games out there, it's a sad case of evolution that keeps *Nectaris* from competing.

G 7 | C 7 | P 6 | M 6 | O 6 | **74**



This game may have been cool five years ago, but now it is uninspired and tedious. RTS games have, more or less, made strategy games like this obsolete; especially when they aren't very good. Outdated graphics and AI make *Nectaris* no more than a curiosity to gamers unfamiliar with the genre, and nostalgia for those of us who have fond memories of titles such as *Iron Storm* and *Gun Griffon*.

G 6 | C 6 | P 5 | M 6 | O 6 | **65**

After *Metal Gear Solid*, this is definitely Konami's other 'incredible' title. Dubbed a *Resident Evil* clone, *SH* is much more than that, so don't let the stereotype fool you. It's pure horror, so I love it already, but the moody camera angles (coupled with extraordinary lighting) were the icing on this (very) bloody cake. Plus, I HAVE to mention the CG... all done by ONE person? Now that's talent! Plus, this was the first game where I actually LIKED the fog... imagine that!

G 9 C 7 P 8 M 10 O 8 **92**

To me, this game kills *Resident Evil*. Puzzles for the gamer who wants something more; many scares and fake scares for the horror movie buffs; and shotgun-toting action for the ECMs. Never before has a game come by that has scared me as much as this one did. If you're not into the whole *Hellraiser* bit, then why are you even reading this viewpoint? Between this and *MGS*, I can forgive Konami for abortions like *Deadly Arts* and *Castlevania* on the N64.

G 9 C 8 P 9 M 9 O 7 **96**

Silent Hill is definitely a *Resident Evil* clone... everything from your health meter to the "go here to get the diamond key that opens this door" gameplay. However, *Silent Hill* is filled with plenty of wicked scares throughout and not the spotty one-shot scares of *RE*. The puzzles in this game are both fun and challenging. A few gripes are the moaning flesh babies that have one irritating sound file, and some rather poor animation on the enemies.

G 8 C 8 P 9 M 9 O 7 **88**



Silent Hill
PlayStation
Konami

This game blew me away. Nothing is more refreshing than being totally blindsided by a title that you had completely forgotten was in development. In the maelstrom surrounding *Metal Gear Solid*, *Syphon Filter* got lost — and probably for the best. In its underdog position, *SP* may just be the sleeper hit of the year. It is already firmly cemented in my top five for the year (such as it is thus far). Anyone who owns a PlayStation would be a fool not to buy this game.

G 9 C 8 P 9 M 10 O 9 **97**

There's been almost no press about this game so far, and that's a shame because it deserves some accolades. While I don't think the overall package is as Solid as Konami's (Gabe has trouble stopping on a dime), *SP* is an action-packed, shotgun-fest, dripping with blood and intrigue. Sniper head shots, somersaults are all part of a solid engine and sweet motion capture. What's not to like? ...Well maybe the fact that people have never heard of *SP* till now.

G 9 C 7 P 9 M 8 O 8 **92**

While ramming games like *Cardinal Syn* down our throats, 989 Studios naturally neglected to mention that *Syphon Filter* is actually a better game than *Metal Gear Solid*. Featuring less stealth and more action (head shots, execution-style!), this should have been the title 989 was beating us over the head with for the past few months. Instead, it'll more than likely languish on store shelves and make a bee-line for the bargain bin —who missed the boat on this one?!

G 8 C 8 P 9 M 8 O 8 **94**



Syphon Filter
PlayStation
989 Studios

Aah, those *Snowboard Kids*. Back in action! Who wouldn't want to race a dino? Once again, the idea is very cool (snowboarding without snow!) but the implementation should have been a LOT better. There's no real sense of speed, and like *Mario Kart 64*, this one suffers from a severe case of 'second place happiness' (being in second place is actually a bonus). But despite its flaws, this game's still a ton of fun, and those freaky characters are just the coolest!

G 8 C 7 P 7 M 8 O 7 **84**

Although I avoided the original *Snowboard Kids* like my ex-girlfriend had contracted Ebola and was looking to get back together, I found this silly sequel about a million times better than the original! Improved graphics and a much more solid engine lead way to what I still think looks like Sesame Street meets ESPN's Winter X-games. Fans of the original title and gamers searching for a bit of light-hearted winter fun are sure to be satisfied. Is that yellow snow... ahhhhhhhh!

G 8 C 6 P 8 M 6 O 7 **85**

Unlike the 'OK' reaction that Teeter and Fury had to *SBK2* (these guys cruise the same parks, <shudder>), I was utterly enthralled with it for the past two weeks, even with *Sonic Adventure* in the office. Far and away superior to the first chapter, with improved colors, blistering speed (Teeter doesn't drive, so has no idea what "sense of speed" means), and tons of fantastic real-time cut scenes propel this one to the head of the go-kart class (ahead of *Mario*

G 8 C 8 P 9 M 8 O 8 **93**



Snowboard Kids 2
Nintendo 64
Atlus

Err... I really can't say anything nice about this game. It's probably the lowest scoring game in VP history! This game is just so... UGH! There are games out there that make me cringe, but this one takes the Sausage King Award! It doesn't even come close to *Bust-A-Groove*, and it shouldn't even be considered a 'clone' worthy of the same category. Heck, it shouldn't even be considered a game! Buy it, and I'll personally track you down and jump you...ghetto-style!

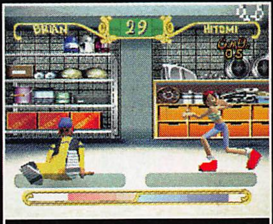
G 4 C 5 P 2 M 2 O 1 **20**

The music video game genre might be the hippest thing nowadays, but I'd rather be square than play turds like this. Simply put, if you want a dance game that doesn't follow any kind of rhythm, ugly animated characters, uninteresting moves, and terrible music, this one's right up your alley. This game is so far from being a clone of *Bust-A-Groove*, it gets my vote for worst import game in recent memory. Buy it, and I'll hold you down while Waka works you.

G 6 C 6 P 4 M 2 O 7 **34**

Aww, man! This game is bad, but it doesn't fall into the nether regions of bad... with the likes of *Criticom* and *Rise of the Robots*, games which have made an indelible mark in video game history as being the bottom of the barrel. For what it's worth, the custom music option is a brilliant idea... they just didn't pull it off. Too bad it could've used motion capture... and a new graphics engine... and good music. Buy it, and I'll be lookout for Waka and Dango.

G 6 C 6 P 4 M 2 O 7 **54**



Dance, Dance, Dance
PlayStation
Konami

Now this is what I'm talking about folks! Plenty of stuff to blow up, a decent assortment of vehicles to control and graphics as sharp as Reubus' comebacks... not! Sure this may not be the most celebrated DC release yet, but trust me, if you're into games like *Chopper Attack* or *Desert Strike*, Incoming should tide you over nicely until... oh sorry, forgot you don't have a DC yet. How's your Master System holding up anyways? Hey *Space Harrier*, cool!

G 9 C 8 P 7 M 7 O 8 **90**

I'm in the middle of the road here, and I'll tell you, it's a danger zone to be in; between Mr. Fury and Mr. ECM. *Incoming* looks excellent and controls quite well. Unfortunately, it also suffers from uninspired gameplay and some slowdown. While *Incoming* isn't particularly bad, it really has nothing to bring you back. And after playing both the phenomenal *VF3tb* and the astonishing *Sonic Adventure*, it's hard to play a game where you just tediously shoot stuff.

G 8 C 8 P 7 M 7 O 7 **84**

On the one hand you have *Sonic Adventure* and on the other you have *Incoming*. I suppose you have to take the good with the bad, as much as that may hurt. While it has brilliant explosions and some nice color, the repetitive nature of the game coupled with annoying amounts of draw-in and hardcore slowdown ruined any fun I could have had with this title. Fury apparently doesn't really have a clue—not that there was ever really any question...

G 9 C 8 P 9 M 10 O 7 **70**



Incoming
Dreamcast
Imagineer

Easily one of the best games I've ever played! Those who can find fault (and of course I realize that some inevitably will) in this unbelievable game should be shipped away to some remote island in the South Pacific and forced to live out their remaining days playing *Rise of the Robots* and *Budokan*! First generation?!... It doesn't get much better than this. Or does it? Three hundred or so days is plenty of time for a few changes... see ya in September!

G 10 C 9 P 10 M 10 O 10 **100**

In the immortal words of Kid Fan, "16-bit gameplay with 128-bit graphics is all you need to make a winner." And that is what Sonic Team has done (heck, Reubus bought the game without owning a system!)— IT IS THAT GOOD! Every element in SA is an experience, and if this is a "first-gen" game, I can't wait to see what they have in store for us in the future. Yes, it is safe to say that SEGA LOVES YOU! And if you bought *Dance, Dance, Dance* this could save your sorry hide...

G 10 C 9 P 10 M 10 O 10 **100**

While a certain editor from a more 'imaginative' company may lose some respect for me, I'm going to go on record as saying that you have never seen anything remotely like this. This is the next generation; this is the next level; this is the pinnacle of achievement for Yuji Naka and the marvel that is Sonic Team. You want a glimpse of the future now? Go and get a Dreamcast, feed it *SA* and prepare to enter another world—games are back.

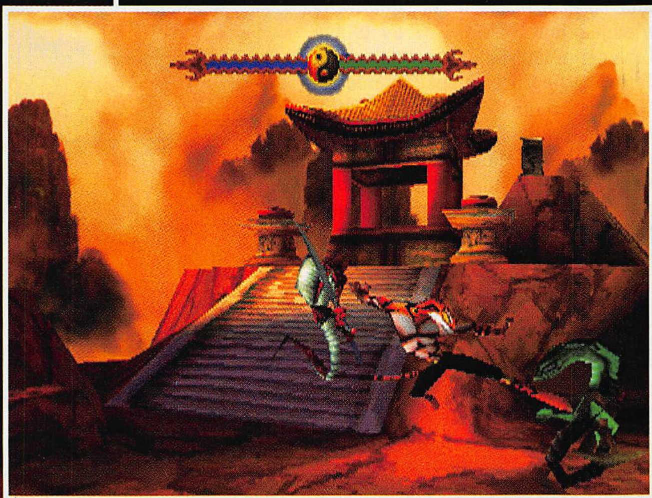
G 10 C 9 P 10 M 10 O 10 **100**



Sonic Adventure
Dreamcast
Sega


Who you
callin'
a pussy?
PlayStation
TEEN
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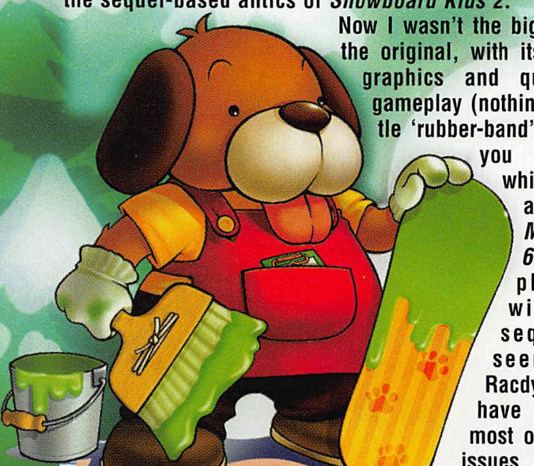
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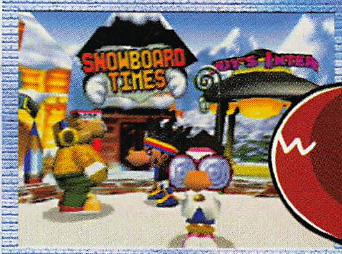
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Take a trip back to the promising, early days of the N64. Back during the era of swift drum-beating and the implication that Nintendo would be for 'quality over quantity' — a mantra that suffered a quick, ugly beating at the hands of 'quality' titles such as *Cruis'n USA* and *Killer Instinct Gold* (that wretching sound you hear is me trying to get the bad taste out of my mouth). However, as time wore on, solid titles became more apparent with only an aberration every now and again (*Deadly Arts*...<blech>), which brings us to the release of Atlus' *Snowboard Kids*; a game that was a 'me too' response to *Mario Kart 64* and *Diddy Kong Racing*. Even with that being the case, it sold exceedingly well, which is probably why I'm staring down a copy of the sequel-based antics of *Snowboard Kids 2*.



Now I wasn't the biggest fan of the original, with its simplistic graphics and questionable gameplay (nothing like a little 'rubber-band' AI to drive you bonkers—which was also a key part of *Mario Kart 64*'s 'gameplay'), but with the sequel, it seems that Racdym & Atlus have addressed most of the major issues.





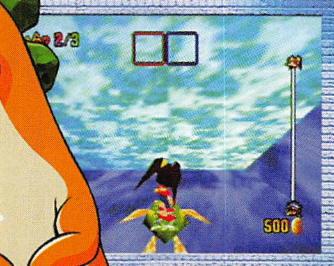


The graphics are much better this time out, with a tremendous increase in the number of on-screen polys. While it won't make *Pen Pen* on DC run for cover, the visuals are far more detailed this time around. *SBK2* still suffers from standard issue, washed-out N64 color depth (hold the bleach, please). The frame rate is solid, and a host of new background elements add to the graphical punch this game delivers.









Around the office, it is generally acknowledged that *Mario Kart 64* is the king of the genre on N64; some would even go so far as saying it eclipses Miyamoto's earlier triumph, *Super Mario Kart*, on SNES (they have, naturally, been relegated to an asylum for their own safety). While I was less than enamored with *MK64*, the same can't be said of the new king of the genre: *Snowboard Kids 2*.

Featuring level after level of snowboarding (grass, sand, and dirt boarding as well) madness, *SBK2* is packed tighter than an especially large slush ball (oh, the pain) with loads of solid gameplay. While there is still an acute case of 'rubber band-itis' inherent in the Kids' second outing, it's not nearly as painful as the first. Rubber band-itis refers to the nasty side-effect of less-than-stellar AI. Basically it means that you're better off being in second place for most of the race and just skating by to win the contest at the last minute so as not to be nailed by an errant pan from the sky (just one of the many devious ways somebody further back in the pack can end your bid for frosty greatness). It's certainly not as severe as it was in *Mario Kart 64* (I snapped a few pads playing through that one).

The multi-player aspect of *SBK2* is rock solid, and more than likely the sole reason most people will buy this game. That's a little unfortunate, as the one-player



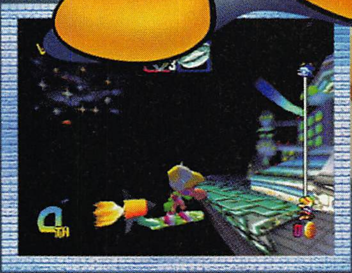




aspect of the game seems to have received a tremendous overhaul from the original, complete with buckets of real-time cinemas each depicting the Kids getting involved in all sorts of mischievous behavior.

The only thing you need to know now, is that you must buy this game. Atlus didn't even manage to meet the demand that the original generated, and that was far from the best piece of software going at the time. Needless to say, I'm a bit impressed with Racdym's latest outing. Now it's time to hit the slopes with a little *Snowboard Kids Plus* on PS! ***ECM***





In the midst of playing through Atlus' latest, we figured we'd give the developer, Racdym, a yell and fire a few questions their way about SBK and their future plans for the series:

GF: How did the idea for Snowboard Kids *come about? Was it inspired by the love that N64 gamers seem to have for Kart-style games?*

Racdym: We have many snowboarders in our company (up to and including our president), and we talked about it whenever we had the chance. So we decided to develop a snowboard game that was fun to play and control. Because you are controlling a character, not a car, we added features such as jumps and tricks, which are what makes a snowboarding game special. In *Snowboard Kids 2*, we think Story Mode will let players enjoy the game even when played alone, and in Battle Mode we increased the intensity so multi-player mode will be a lot more intense this time around.

GF: Are there any plans to port Snowboard Kids *to other platforms?*

Racdym: In Japan we recently released *Snowboard Kids Plus* on PlayStation (ECM's Note: look for it next issue), although we haven't decided about a Stateside release yet. As for a Dreamcast version, we think the hardware is phenomenal and we'd love to do one!

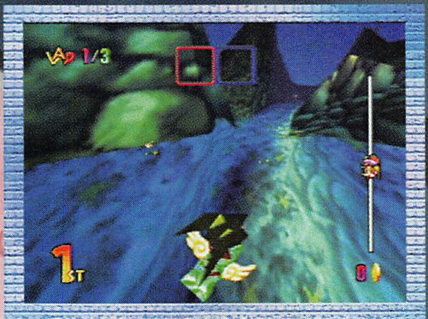
GF: What games have you done in the past?

Racdym: We also did *Trap Gunner* on the PlayStation.

GF: What other titles are you working on for the various platforms?

Racdym: We can't comment on that right now, but we can promise we'll continue to make great games!




R REVIEW

NINTENDO 64

DEVELOPER - RACDYM	# OF PLAYERS - 1-4
PUBLISHER - ATLUS	DIFFICULTY - EASY
FORMAT - CARTRIDGE	AVAILABLE - NOW



ECM
Mario Who?

Tonic Trouble





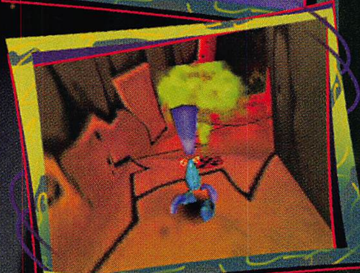
Last year at E3, I was allowed a taste of the gaming nectar that was *Rayman 2*, but that brief touch of nirvana only served to whet my appetite for a solid platformer from the fine, French folks at Ubisoft. Before I'm allowed another visit with my favorite, purple, platforming friend, Ubi has served up *Tonic Trouble* as an appetizer before the main course (*R2*).

Ravenous, I shredded the packaging and slammed the cart into the nearest N64 (which happened to be ECM's). As the infamous Ubisoft logo came up (that same logo which mocked me for a painful month of my life when I finished *Rayman* in its entirety), my platforming glands were already working overtime. Drool fast approaching ECM-when-he-first-saw-*Sonic-Adventure* proportions, I skipped the intro with shaking hands.

And there it was... a game that's like a 20 oz cut of prime rib... to a vegetarian. <music stops> Where were the breath-taking landscapes, which I expected to be like *Rayman 2*... or even *1*? Where were the amazing textures which I knew the N64 was capable of producing with heart-stopping ease? "Not here," said the jointless, grinning, goofy character in front of me. *TT's* environments, thus far, aren't on par with the better looking N64 3D platformers, *Mario 64* and *Banjo Kazooie*. Yes, folks, there's officially trouble in Tonicland.



Trouble is a theme of the story as well. Ed, a violet-colored extraterrestrial accidentally drops a can from his spaceship while cleaning up. The can lands on a nearby planet and mutates the native animals and vegetables into angry sheep and evil carrots. Grögh the Hellish, a Viking-like, all-around meanie holds the can. And he who controls the can controls the... Err... well, it's up to Ed to get the can back to right his wrongs. Besides, you wouldn't want the radishes to be in permanent revolt.



Now, many a gamer will tell you that visuals don't mean anything if the game plays well (case in point... *Glover 64*). But *Tonic's* troubles extend to this area as well. The game is a platformer, and thus far the jump mechanic seems flawed. Instead of getting an instant response (like seeing Super Teeter eat Wasabe for the first time), Ed jumps with lag, so you're forced to anticipate leaps in advance. Once you get over this hump, however, there are a lot of puzzle elements to enjoy, and a world with as much character as the original *Rayman*. Also, Ubisoft has promised to tweak the jumping and flying elements before the game is finalized.





So fear not, Ubi-fans. This preview cart is only 70% complete, and with a change here and there on the visuals and the control, 'the trouble' can be remedied, not only by Ed... but by Ubisoft as well. Guess I'll have to snack on *Dynamite Headdy* for now...*E*











P PREVIEW | **NINTENDO 64**

DEVELOPER - UBISOFT	# OF PLAYERS - 1
PUBLISHER - UBISOFT	DIFFICULTY - MODERATE
FORMAT - CARTRIDGE	AVAILABLE - 1ST QUARTER



EGGO
"Will Ubi break down and ever draw an elbow?"

HYBRID HEAVEN

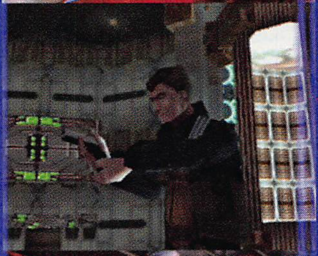


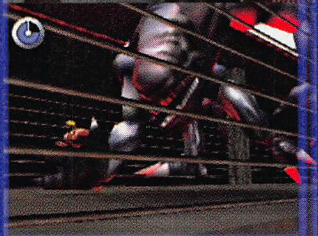












Boy, talk about cutting it close... *Hybrid Heaven* came into the *GF* office at (literally) the 11th hour... so our coverage isn't as intense as it normally would be. But from what I've played, this game's good. So good that I actually had to put in a 6-hour workday! I know, I know... the things I do for you guys.

Our preview copy was partially translated, but was still jam packed with Japanese. No bother, because thankfully *HH's* not the type of game where actual 'reading' comes into play much (strike one for illiteracy!). I'd love to go into detail about the action/role-playing elements, but I already fear my word count dwindling, so I'll save it 'til next time. Just keep the word 'original' in mind.

Imagine mixing *Final Fantasy*, *Resident Evil* and (of course) *Metal Gear Solid* into one game and then you'd **probably** have *Hybrid Heaven*, but even that analogy doesn't really work. The closest thing that comes to mind would be *Parasite Eve*, but even that falls short of how *HH* plays. This is clearly the closest realization of the term 'Action-RPG' ever implemented into a game, and that alone makes this one attention-worthy. But then the game completely switches over to a more RPG-ish battle system (complete with items, attacks... the whole shebang!).









The graphics are great, although they do share a lot in common with that 'other' Konami game (*hack* *Castlevania* *hack*)... but that's good! Real-time lighting, huge environments, and INCREDIBLE cut-scenes are only the beginning... almost makes you wonder what took 'em so long to get the N64 dialed in. But perhaps the biggest shocker is the sound... oh my. Last month I said that *Castlevania* had the best N64 music, but here I am, less than a month later eatin' my words. The music in this game is beyond belief, far surpassing ANY attempt with cartridge music so far. It's so good, I was tempted to crack open the cart, hoping to find a CD hidden in there. Think I'm crazy? Wait until you hear the voices... remember that these are the people that brought us *Metal Gear* and soon everything becomes very clear... when it comes to voice-overs, nobody touches Konami.

So there you have it, an incredibly quick (and glowing!) once-over of Konami's next bomb-shell. Unfortunately I didn't have a chance to soak in the whole experience, but I will say that from my (very brief) time I spent with this one, Konami is totally forgiven for the tragedy that was *Castlevania* (what went wrong?) and my faith in Konami's N64 abilities are completely restored. Expect much coverage for this one soon folks... it's gonna be big. ***ST***

P PREVIEW | NINTENDO 64

DEVELOPER - KONAMI	# OF PLAYERS - 1-2
PUBLISHER - KONAMI	DIFFICULTY - MODERATE
FORMAT - CARTRIDGE	AVAILABLE - MAY



SUPER TEETER
This one redefines Action/RPG.



PREVIEW

NINTENDO 64

DEVELOPER - HUDSON
PUBLISHER - NINTENDO
FORMAT - CART
OF PLAYERS - 1-4
DIFFICULTY - ADJ.
AVAILABLE - NOW



ECM
It's like there's a party in my N64... and everyone's invited!

Not knowing what to fully expect from Nintendo's latest foray into exploiting niche markets with all the deft skill of Mario plowing through a plate of mushroom lasagna (mmmm, goombas), Nintendo hits paydirt yet again with the unveiling of Mario Party (developed by Hudson, oddly enough). While I could bore you with the details of the wonderful party Nintendo recently threw in the San Fran Bay area, I think the space might be better used to describe just what Mario Party is all about.

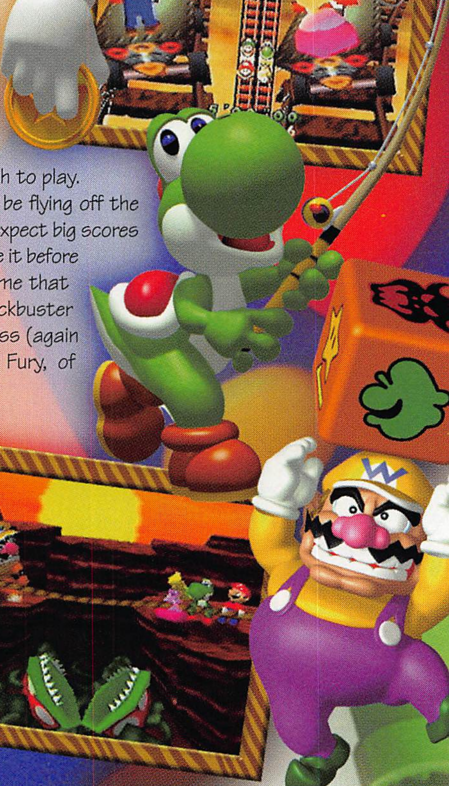
Mario Party is, essentially, a video game version of any number of 'popular' board games from the past, but with some nice enhancements that should put the kibosh on favorites of old. The story goes something like this: One day, various and sundry Mario World characters are lounging around the Mushroom Kingdom when they decide that they'll have a contest to see who's the most popular of them all — nothing like a good old fashioned popularity contest; something that plagued just about every child in America at one point or another (boy, I miss high school... <hack>). Although everybody knows full well that Mario is the king, I figure he was nice enough to humor the wannabes (especially that Luigi guy—forget it man, you're never gonna be anything more than the video game version of Jan-Michael Vincent).

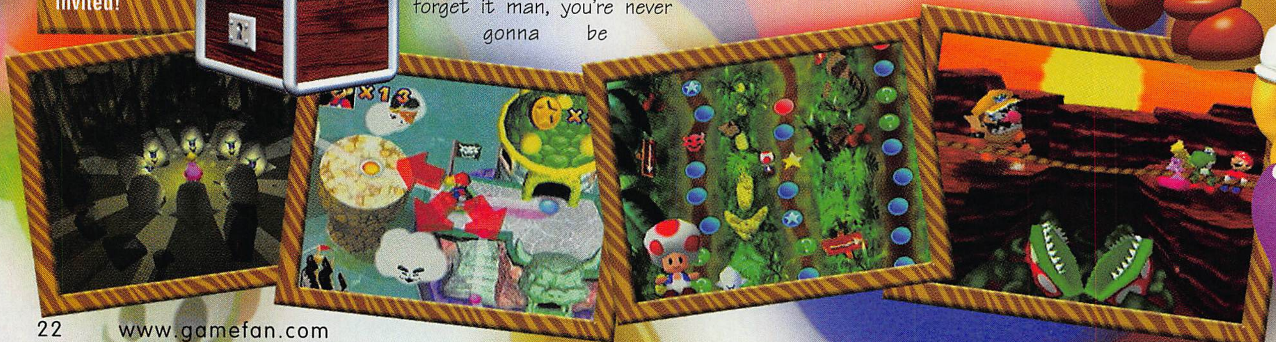
All of this plays out across a multitude of boards that feature everything from Donkey Kong's jungle to a giant birthday cake. The object is to obtain enough stars (yes, the ones scattered about in Super Mario 64) throughout the course of the game to be crowned the "Superstar" (why in the world is Wario even in this group, he's more third-string than Luigi).

Collecting the stars, however, requires two things: 1. You need to find Toad on the board, and 2. You need enough coins to purchase a star (20 coins will get ya one star). Collecting coins is where the game takes off. By playing though a variety of mini-games (56 in all!) you can collect coins to buy stars, steal stars (thanks to Big Boo), and fly around the board with Shy Guy. Some of the games are team efforts, 3-on-1, 2-on-2, and free-for-alls. Virtually every Mario World character has some sort of cameo (though I didn't notice Lakitu—perhaps he's behind the camera). The game is fabulously addicting as long as you have 3 other friends with which to play.

Needless to say this game will be flying off the shelves upon release, and you can expect big scores next month in Viewpoints. If you see it before then, though, you can safely assume that this is yet another Nintendo blockbuster that no one can really afford to miss (again provided you have friends, unlike Fury, of course). ***ECM***





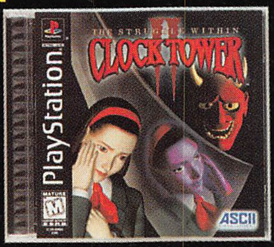




Dueling personalities and multiple dead-endings lead you through an all-new "goryline" of thrills-and-chills. Terror reigns you in and horror holds you down, as you let out a blood-curdling scream against the insane pain that has become the bane of your existence. Also, with vibration function compatibility, nail-biting becomes almost impossible, as the shaking of your hands is equaled only to the shaking in your boots. So, you are cordially invited into a world where death comes unnaturally...and often.

The horrifying sequel to the original Clock Tower

- Multiple enemies and a main character plagued by split personalities
- Vibration function compatible



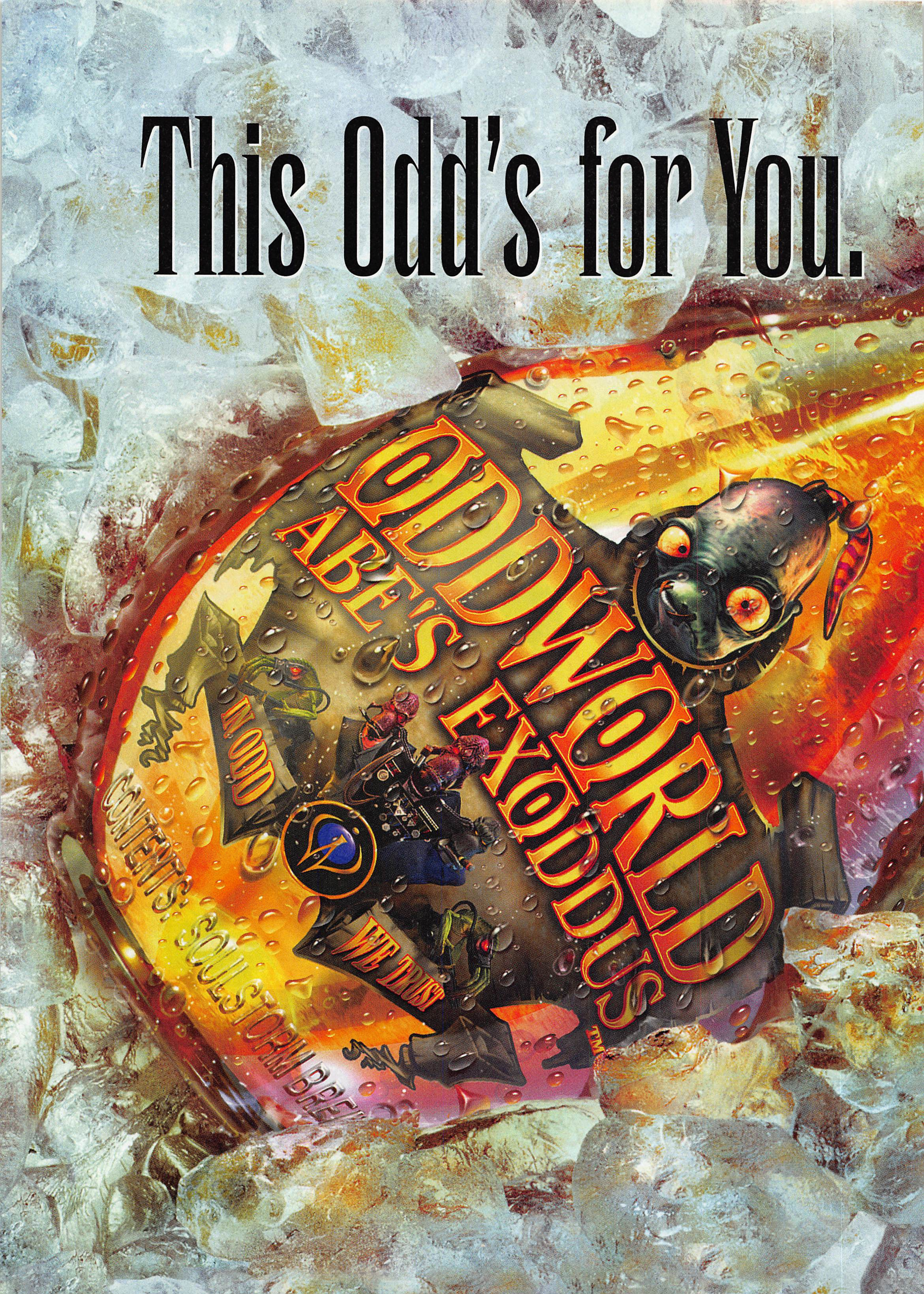
- 13 different endings
- Great sound & graphics
- Fast-paced storyline and more strategy

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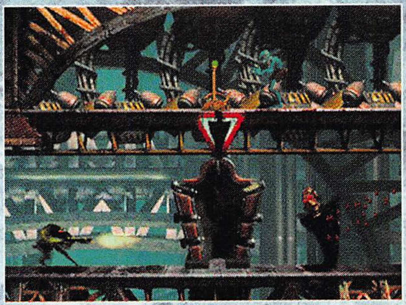
"...everything the previous game was and more...an incredible gaming experience."
- EGM

"...even better-and odder- than the original."
- Official PlayStation Magazine

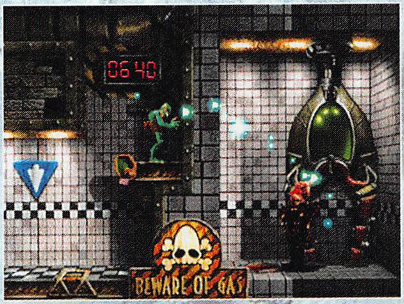
"Exoddus easily earns a place among the PlayStation's best this year."
- GamePro

"Improvements and pluses that will delight all the old fans and the countless new ones."
- GameFan

"...combines stunning graphics and engrossing gameplay." (★★★★ out of four)
- USA TODAY



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JADE COCOON









Crave has really landed a whopper here... a game capable of putting them on the video game map overnight (you didn't think that Square would lose sleep over *Shadow Madness*, did you?). It was originally called *Tamamayu Monogatari*, but they've decided to change the U.S. name to *Jade Cocoon* because they didn't want anyone to get it confused with... umm... err... hmm... <insert writer's block here>.

Studio Ghibli — the group behind Hayao Miyazaki's masterpieces (any true Japanese animation fan should join Shidoshi in morning prayers in the direction of SG) — was responsible for the anime sequences in *Jade Cocoon*, and that statement is more powerful than my 11 words can convey. Just look at this game and be amazed. Valid comparisons have been made between Miyazaki's work and Disney (which bought the rights to his movies)... we're talking top of the line animation here, folks (e.g., *Kiki's Delivery Service*, *My Neighbor Totoro*, *Princess Monoke*, etc.).







But let's get to the game, shall we? Loosely termed, *Jade Cocoon* is a mix between *Final Fantasy VII* and *Monster Rancher* (what better ingredients to make up a sure-fire hit?). What a year '99 is shaping up to be... another *Final Fantasy*, another *Monster Rancher*, and now a game that's a little bit of both!



It's an RPG with hard-core 'ranching elements — capturing monsters, combining them, and fighting with 'em. While the game's backgrounds are pre-rendered and just plain beautiful... even on par with *Final Fantasy VII* <biting my Square-loving tongue at the thought>.





Story goes... that when the balance between good and evil was thrown askew, the forest creatures turned on man and started destroying humanity. Looking in the face of legions of angry rain forest-dwellers, man builds barriers to keep the tree-huggers away from the cities. But those barriers are starting to crumble, and a swarm of insects is poised to destroy the village of Syrus. It's up to you, Levant — the son of a Cocoon Master (at least he's not the town's garbage man), to brave the perils of the forest and be the town's fix-it man.



Not only is *Jade Cocoon* one of the best looking games of the year, it's also an aural achievement. The musical scores are just what's needed to complement the gorgeous, cinematic landscapes.

It's still early in *JC's* development, with the voices still in Japanese, but Crave has promised nothing but the best voice-acting talent for the English speaking parts. Let's hope that Crave pulls

P PREVIEW | PlayStation

DEVELOPER - GENKI	# OF PLAYERS - 1
PUBLISHER - CRAVE ENT.	DIFFICULTY - EASY
FORMAT - CD	AVAILABLE - AUGUST



EGGO
Crave who...?





KENJI SHIMIZU GENKI INTERVIEW!



Producer, Lead Programmer, 3D Artist, JADE COCOON

Q: What titles has Genki done in the past?

A: *Belt Logger 9* for PSX, *Kileak The Blood 1* and *2* for PSX, *Tokyo Highway Battle* for PSX, and more recently *Virtua Fighter 3tb* for Dreamcast.

Q: How long was Jade Cocoon in development?

A: Exactly two years.

Q: What role did Katsuya Kondoh play in the development of the game?

A: As you know, he was Art Director and Conceptual Artist on Japanese anime movies such as *My Neighbor Totoro*, *Laputa Castle in the Sky*, and *Princess Mononoke*. He was Art Director on our game, and supervised the visual design of all of the characters and rooms.

Q: Now that you've done VF3tb on Dreamcast, do you have plans to port Jade Cocoon?

A: There are no plans to port the game to other platforms at this time.

Q: Do you have other Dreamcast games in development right now?

A: Yes, we have other Dreamcast games in development. The names are still undecided, but one will be an action game, and another will be a racing game.

Q: Do you have any other PSX games in development right now?

A: No, not at the moment.

Q: What do you think of developing for the PSX in the future?

A: Since recent games have a tendency to be in development for a very long time, it's hard to say what the future of PSX will hold. Until the PSX2 situation becomes more clear, we won't know what to think.

Q: What kind of PlayStation games would you like to make in the future?

A: There's so much new hardware coming out nowadays. But, I don't think the PlayStation hardware is powerful enough to handle the kind of games I want to design. But as we get our hands on the new hardware, I think the capabilities of these machines will lead us to design different kinds of games.

\- Kenji Shimizu

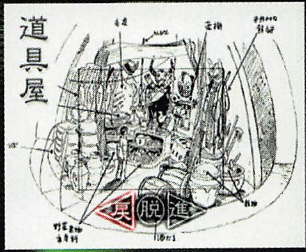












through on that promise, because there is a lot of talking in the game. Almost every time a character opens his/her mouth, you actually hear their voice, instead of just reading it.

If the localization and dubbing match up to *Tamamayu Monogatari's* (gesundheit) top-notch production values, then Crave is going to have a very merry Christmas... to the point of stealing some of the thunder fromf Square's flagship, *VIII*, this year. *E*





Monster Rancher?!

Lucky for you, it's not all bad being the son of the village Cocooner... For Levant has learned the fine art of capturing defenseless animals and bagging them for a life of slavery. Simply whip out your handy ocarina and play a tune while capturing the little critter in battle. Later, take them back to your village where they are domesticated into joining you in battle. You can catch up to 13 monsters at a time in your bag, and whip out three of your favorites in battle to fight or cast spells for you!





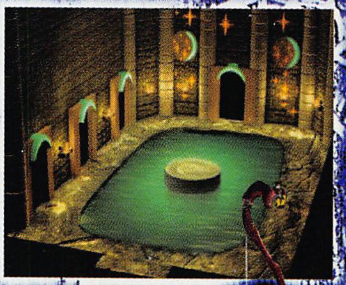








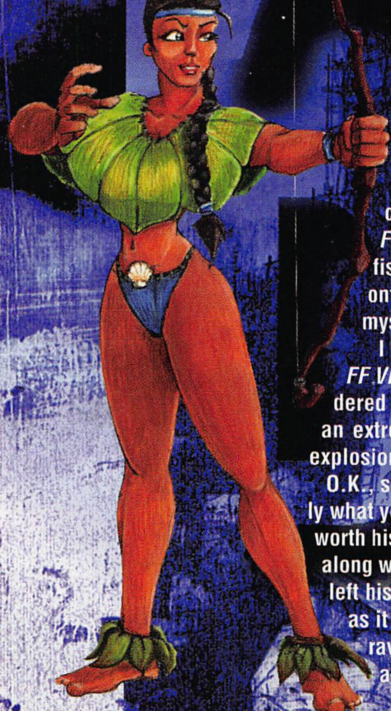
SHADOW MADNESS







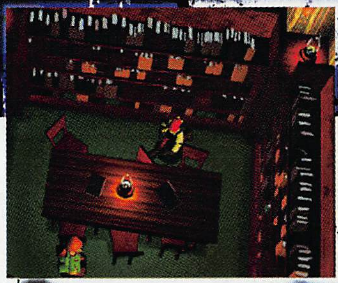


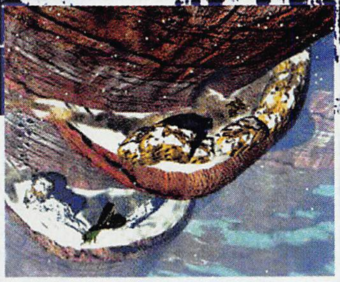


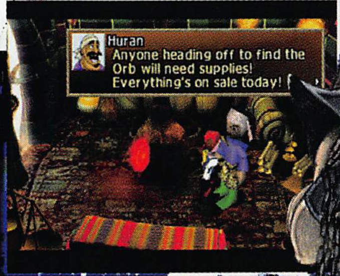
Heh. It's kinda funny when you think about it... like, maybe two... three years ago, all you would hear from the game playing public was "We need more RPGS!!!" but not now. Oh, no. The commercial and critical success of the likes of Square's *Final Fantasy VII* and, to a lesser extent, Konami's *Suikoden* seem to have opened the PlayStation floodgates for a fistful of would-be Role-Playing powerhouses, and with the rise of any genre, you gotta expect the games that leech onto what works to cling to it for dear life. Considering the history behind Crave Entertainment's upcoming tale of mystery and mayhem, *Shadow Madness*, you'd have to be a bit slow not to be a tad suspicious of the game's roots.

I mean come on. The creative force behind the game actually includes some members of the aforementioned *FF VII*'s development team, and visually, the game more than borrows stylistically from the same school of pre-rendered pizzazz. So will this one have anything to offer that we haven't seen countless times before? Only if you count an extremely engrossing storyline and some of the most innovative play mechanics to hit the RPG scene since its explosion onto the 32-bit horizon as unique elements... But hey, who needs that, right?

O.K., so I'm sure you wanna know what the big deal is, already. Well, *SM's* well-crafted plot makes sure that is exactly what you set out to discover. The story up to this point finds our hero, Stinger, in a tight spot. Like any rebellious teen worth his salt, he sets out to leave home and become a man, but of course, on the way out, the door hits him in the rear... along with the rest of his house and oh, yeah... half the town! A huge, inexplicable explosion has rocked his 'hood, and left his world in utter chaos. Whatever is causing all this nuttiness is apparently more than mere physical destruction, as it is turning the population into a bunch of teenage girls at a Backstreet Boys concert... yes, you guessed it: stark raving mad!! Now he has to get to the bottom of the whole mess. With the aid of a woodsy chick named WindLeaf and a mechanical sidekick by the name of Harv-5, our hero has to pick up the plot of a self-help infomercial and,







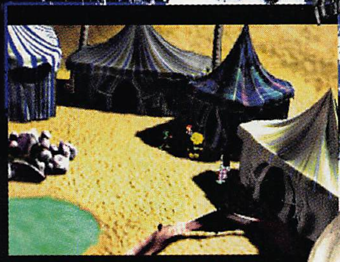
you guessed it, Stop the Madness... Shadow Madness, that is... hehehe.

The story itself, which I'm not about to ruin for ya, is driven by some of the wittiest sarcasm this side of a Working Designs special and does an excellent job of getting you into the characters and their plight. Though a bit 'out there' at times (like a certain farmer's obsession with beans or a guy with a near psychotic obsession with cats...), the story is easily the area where *Shadow Madness* best establishes itself as a top-quality title.

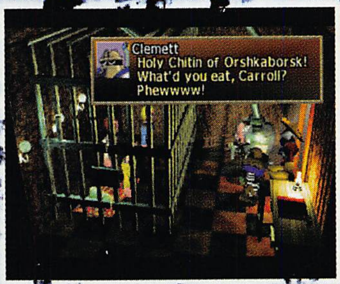
Not that the gang at Crave has left the rest of the game to it own devices. Thus far, *SM's* tale of beasts and beans is set in some of the best looking pre-rendered backdrops we have ever seen in an RPG, and you will often find yourself amazed at the sheer scope and beauty of the game's environments. The overhead map is also unique, in that it features a detailed, hand-drawn map, as opposed to the traditional rendered treatment, and it goes a long way in establishing the game's unique feel.

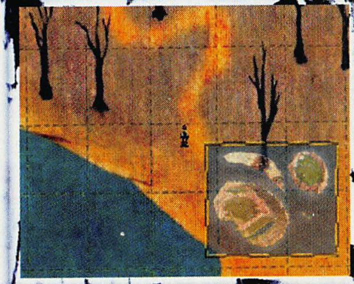
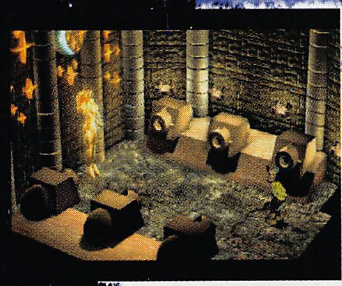
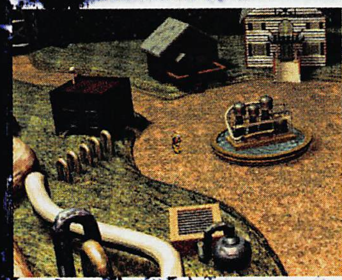
In the preview disk, the only lackluster area would have to be the game's combat sequences, which, though much improved over early versions, still pale in comparison to the likes of a *Final Fantasy* or Enix's spectacular *Star Ocean 2*. Though attacks are plentiful, they just lack that extra "umph" that makes your jaw hit the floor, and considering we are well into the fourth generation of PlayStation software, it's painfully obvious at this stage in the RPG game.

Thankfully, what *Shadow Madness* lacks in flash, it has made great attempts to make up for in substance. The combat system is intuitive and manages to bring a lot to the table. Not only do the game's 140+ enemies have a wide variety of attacks and animations, your char-







acters each have a slew of combat abilities that are split up into three primary attack types: guarded, normal, and aggressive. Depending on how you come at the bad guys, you can leave yourself open to some serious backlash, so the gang at the Craveyard has seen fit to throw in a ton of special distance attacks that will allow you to keep the bad guys on their toes. All of these elements and more are combined in a package that really does a lot to keep combat interesting. There is also a nice mixture of turn-based action and 'twitch'-based action to keep you in the action [ed's note: He's a funny guy, our Bubba...]. Heck, you can even attempt to avoid battle by "hiding" from approaching enemies on the overhead map. Cool beans (no in-game pun intended... I swear!)!

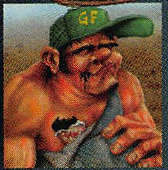
Not to mention the game's impressive musical score, excellent Duel Shock support, and a host of mini-games that should be more than enough to keep the RPG enthusiast busy for days on end... and we're getting all this from a development house right here in the good ol' U.S. of A?!?? Groovy. We can only hope that this one continues to build on the elements that already made it one of the top RPGs to watch in 1999. Keep your eyes peeled for the full Monty when final time rolls around. ***BB***



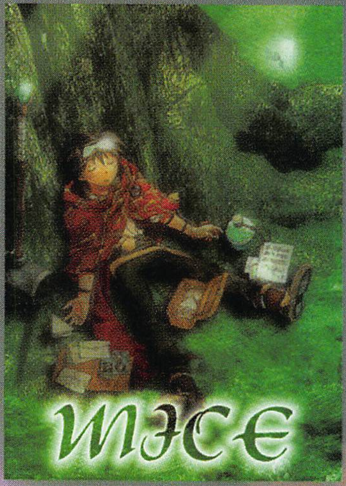
P PREVIEW

PlayStation

DEVELOPER - CRAVEYARD	# OF PLAYERS - 1
PUBLISHER - CRAVE ENT.	DIFFICULTY - MODERATE
FORMAT - CD	AVAILABLE - MARCH



BIG BUBBA
A solid American RPG? Whaa?!





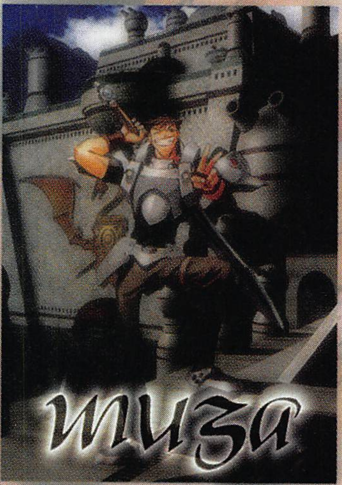




Following a devastating invasion by the Diovana Kingdom, the Triumph family, rulers of Kant, lose everything. Meis Triumph finds himself alone in the world, poor and homeless for the first time in his life. Heading towards the capitol city of Boysbea in search of work, he comes upon a girl being attacked by several thugs. Being the lover of women that he his, Meis decides to help her out. But in the scuffle, although he emerges victorius, his sword (a family heirloom) is broken in two. The girl, Sodina Donfried, is extremely grateful and offers to introduce Meis to her brother, Gerville Donfried, who just happens to be a master blacksmith! Once introduced, Meis is awed by the craftsmanship that Gerville displays (but to tell the truth, he's awed a heck of a lot more by Gerville's cute assistants... hubba hubba!). Gerville soon recognizes the broken sword as something special, and is disgusted by the lack of skill that Meis used in handling the weapon. He agrees to repair the blade, but under one condition: Meis must travel to a nearby cave to retrieve the rare metal that can be found there, but more importantly he must slay the monster that lives there... with the broken sword! Of course he does it (naturally) and is invited to become an apprentice for Gerville. He's excited by the job, but just the thought of being around such cuties drives him wild! Sounds like an epic to me!



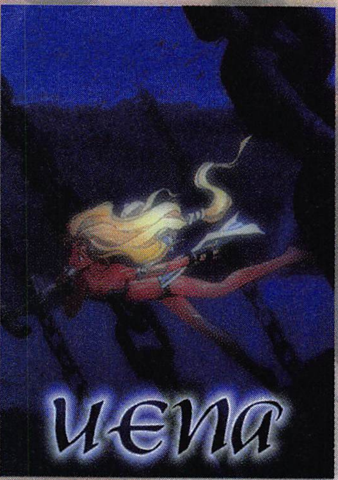






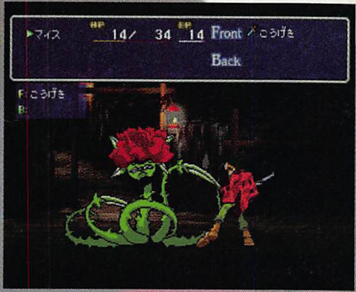
RED Company, developers of the popular import Saturn title, *Sakura Taisen* (not surprising, also a semi-sorta dating game... hmm, those guys probably don't get out much) are back in their most ambitious project yet. *Thousand Arms* isn't just your typical Japanese, 40-60 hour role-playing game with wacky characters... well, that's not quite true... it pretty much IS all that, but is that so bad? In this case, definitely not!

Following the current trend of 'pseudo-3D' RPGs, *TA* has the newer, 3D, isometric viewpoint made popular in games like *Grandia* and *Xenogears*. This time, the camera's fixed, but no worries on bad angles, as the camera always seems to be







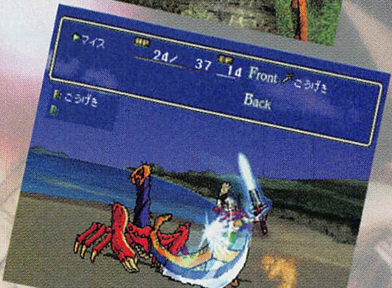


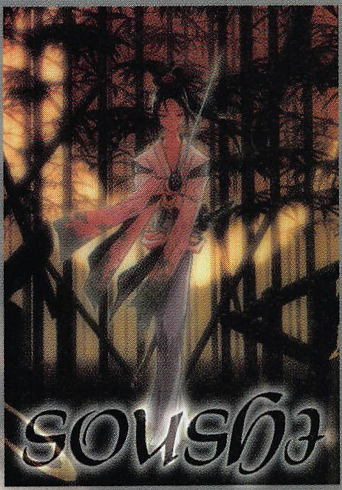
P PREVIEW | PlayStation

DEVELOPER - RED SO
PUBLISHER - ATLUS
FORMAT - CD



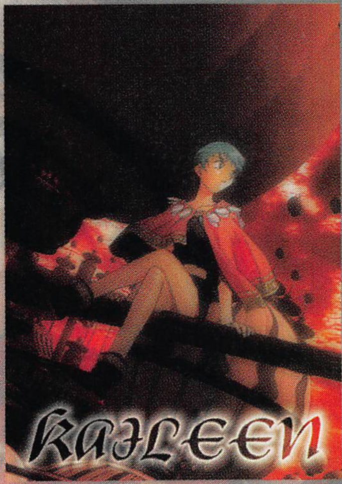






in just the right spot. The in-game graphics are very good (although not as bright as *Grandia*), with fantastic locales built with solid framework. The effect as a whole is very convincing. The battles are all almost completely 2D (with 3D backdrops for an eerie effect), and the characters are all crystal-clear sharp. I will admit that the animation could use a little work, but it's still 2D, so I'm not griping much! If there's any serious flaw with the visuals so far, it has to be the over-map... ugh. I suppose you can argue that this is probably the least important place to concentrate on graphics... but come on! And what about those ultra-cool, anime-ish cut-scenes that harken back to the glory days of the PC-Engine RPG? I'm telling you, this one's got style!

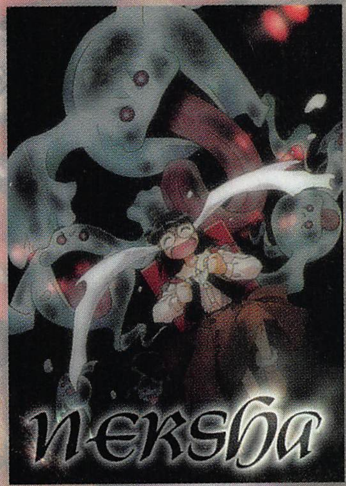




What's really unique about *TA* isn't the way it looks, but how it plays. A great majority of the game's leveling up isn't dealt so much with fighting monsters, but with dating...! Yes, dating. You're constantly presented with 'choices,' and how you answer will determine the outcome of your skill level. If only REAL dating were so simple... we'd all be playboys! Er, anyway...



The music, from what I've heard, is epic... if the final has this kind of quality then I just might buy the soundtrack (oh yeah, I buy game soundtracks). The voice (although our rev still had the original Japanese) is really cool. Word is that Atlus is completely re-doing ALL of the voice for the American release (it makes sense)... please, please hire good actors!!

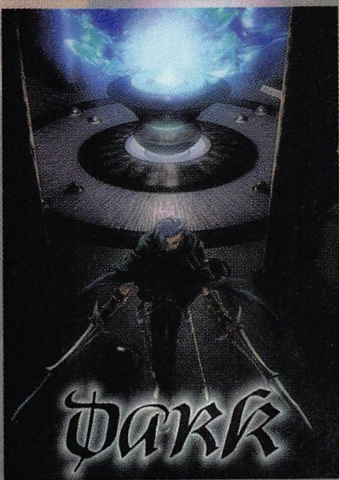


So there you have it. A really great RPG that's bound to be successful in the RPG-starved U.S. (there has been a bit of a dry spell lately), and it should fill the void before the release of *Final Fantasy VIII* comes along. You can bet that we'll be all over this as *TA* gets closer to its anticipated U.S. release date. So you might want to start brushing up on those social skills. You know, the things you do AFTER you shut the system off... heh heh! ***ST***





Fantasy, swords, and dating... all rolled into one!





ARE

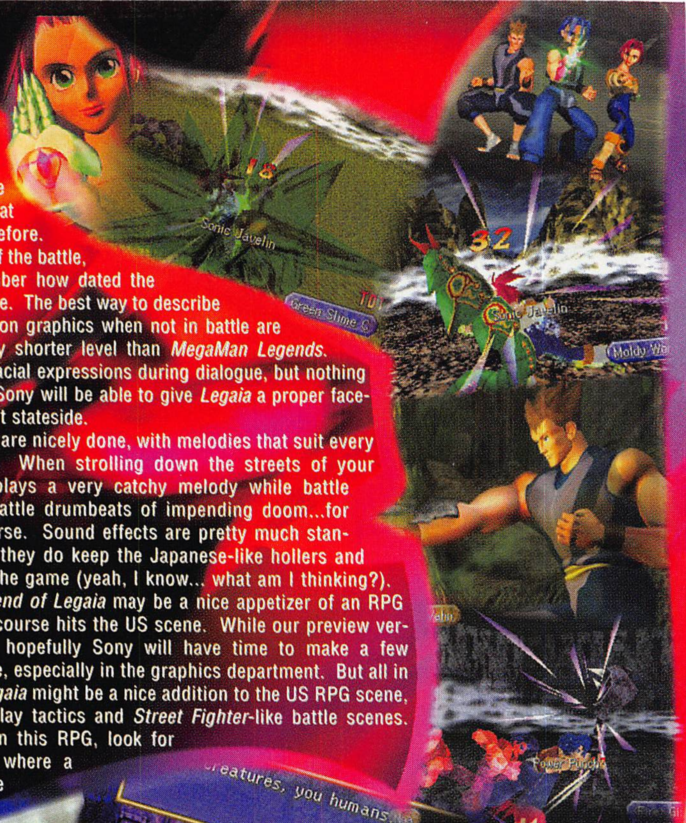
OF PLAYERS - 1

DIFFICULTY - MODERATE

AVAILABLE - 2ND QTR. '99



SUPER TEETER
Now this is my kind of 'leveling' up.



Like the Dust Bowl drought, the RPG genre on the PlayStation was sorely lacking quantity for quite some time <cue in tumbleweed music with hamonica melody>. Then out from the west <shot of sunset on Pacific Coast>... no, way out west <cue in theme of "Sakura" with picture of rising sun from Japan> came RPG salvation. Now, with the explosion that was known as Square, it seems like an endless wave of RPGs are now available on the PlayStation. And unfortunately, the mediocrity of present day RPGs seem to swamp that handful of good ones. Well, Sony's answer to all those crying for a solid RPG is a little package called *The Legend of Legaia*, which should be on US shores very soon.

Taking place in our world that has been ravaged by "The Mist", this fog-like phenomenon is said to create mysterious monsters and mutate humans into mindless beings, forcing humans to live just outside of the fog. And consequently, the fog covers more area everyday; unless someone find a way to stop it, the human civilization will cease to exist. You take the roles of three main characters, Vahn, a young village warrior, Noa, a girl brought up by a mystical wolf, and Gala, a martial artist.

Sound okay so far? Well, it gets better as combat sequences are done in a combo-style much like *Xenogears*. Each character has four attacks available - low attack, left attack, right attack, and high attack. Depending upon the level of your character, you are able to string 3 hit or more combinations of attacks. But it gets even better, as certain combinations will reveal a new special art (complete with "NEW ARTS!" flashing across in big letters) which deals out mondo amounts of damage. Yeah, you have your cool magic spells you learn from absorbing the magical essences of defeated enemies, and you might find a weapon or two here, but most of the time, you'll be cloberring your foes with the kung-fu skills you discover. And there are a lot of power combos to be discovered in this game.

Graphically, this game could use a nice tune-up, since most of the 3D polys in the game are only slightly better than the *Wild Arms* battle sequences. However, the visuals in the battle sequences are slightly better than the exploration and world map graphics. Special effects of normal attacks, power combos, and spells are all right, but nothing that hasn't been seen before. And once you're out of the battle, you'll start to remember how dated the rest of the graphics are. The best way to describe most of the 3D polygon graphics when not in battle are graphics on a slightly shorter level than *MegaMan Legends*. Characters do show facial expressions during dialogue, but nothing too fancy. Hopefully, Sony will be able to give *Legaia* a proper face-lift before it comes out stateside.

Sounds and music are nicely done, with melodies that suit every aspect of the game. When strolling down the streets of your hometown, a flute plays a very catchy melody while battle sequences contain battle drumbeats of impending doom...for your enemies of course. Sound effects are pretty much standard, though I hope they do keep the Japanese-like hollers and shouts of victory in the game (yeah, I know... what am I thinking?).

All in all, *The Legend of Legaia* may be a nice appetizer of an RPG before the main *FF8* course hits the US scene. While our preview version isn't complete, hopefully Sony will have time to make a few changes here an there, especially in the graphics department. But all in all, *The Legend of Legaia* might be a nice addition to the US RPG scene, with its fresh gameplay tactics and *Street Fighter*-like battle scenes. For the final word on this RPG, look for next month's issue, where a full review will be done by yours truly.

D



Legend of LEGAIA

P PREVIEW | PlayStation

DEVELOPER - CONTRAIL	# OF PLAYERS - 1
PUBLISHER - SCEA	DIFFICULTY - MODERATE
FORMAT - CD	AVAILABLE - MARCH



DANGOHEAD
Plant a tree... kick some ass!

SEKI REI NO RIN





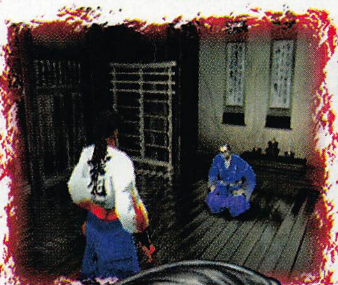


Samurai... honorable, powerful, and deadly with the sword. They are still the most revered warriors in the world, both for their honorable code, and their renown skill with the blade. And so, this question begs to be asked: WHERE ARE THE SAMURAI GAMES!? Ya think with all the ninjas games out there on the market, there would be at least one good samurai action/adventure game out on the PS, N64, or Saturn. So where are all the OWW! < as CD case thrown by ECM hits my head>...what's this? <opens CD case> *Samurai Legends* from Konami.... nevermind.

On the heels of the magnificent *Metal Gear Solid*, *Samurai Legends* (called *Japan* in... er... um... Japan) places you in the role of two characters, a male swordsman (name) or a female ninja warrior (name). While both characters have separate storylines, they intertwine as the game progresses. Both characters return to their hometown village only to find it wrecked by some mysterious evil. And obviously, it's up to the dynamic duo to find out the cause of the maliciousness and, of course, stop it.

Clearly scribbling notes while playing Capcom's *Resident Evil*, *Samurai Legends* backgrounds are pre-rendered environments exactly like those found in *Resident Evil*. While this may detract from those 3D camera moving pansy peoples out there, it doesn't really bother me, especially since the backgrounds are well-detailed and fit the feudal time period this game takes place in. Characters in the game well-detailed with some nice textures, though slightly less detailed than those in *Metal Gear Solid*. And the animation quality of the characters is definitely not on par with *Metal Gear Solid* whether it's cutting through enemies, or simply walking around the town. But even with the minor graphical flaws, overall this game looks quite nice.

A combination of Tenchu and Resident Evil...











Zan You Den 斬妖伝 邪藩 JAPAN

However, gameplay is where this game needs some major tweaking. As you cut down enemies, your technique meter fills up. Once it is complete filled, you will learn a new special technique adding more blood-gushing ginzu skills to your handbook. While this is cool, if it weren't for these new special attacks, this game would get rather boring with the simple hack-'n-slash drone-like attacks that require little to no thought. While I guess this is just for beginners sake, there are two things they could add right when the game starts: the ability to slash and run at the same time, and make jumping attacks an integral part of the game. If Konami can fix these problems that plague this excellent title, you might be looking at another adventure on par with *MGS*. Look for more soon by yours truly.

HIBAKO TAROU

P PREVIEW

PlayStation

DEVELOPER - KONAMI	# OF PLAYERS - 1
PUBLISHER - KONAMI	DIFFICULTY - EASY
FORMAT - CD	AVAILABLE - FEBRUARY



DANGO
A Tenchu-killer in the making? Well, not yet...

CIVILIZATION II







There is no bigger fan of *Civ 2* than I. Over the last three years I have logged thousands of hours and conquered hundreds of worlds. To this day, I try to fit in a couple hours of *Civ 2* every day (ECM will attest to that) and I confidently make the boast that I'm one of the best players there is [Eggo's note: We'll see about that in *Civ 2 multiplayer*, Mr. Man].

This said, it should come as no surprise that I was beside myself with glee (no small feat, attaining that state) when this arrived. A PlayStation *Civ 2* is solid gold to this gamer, and the first chance I got, I popped it in, anxious to vanquish some enemies.

In the infamous words of Colonel Kurtz — "The horror... the horror." *Civ 2* for the PlayStation is the kind of personal hell that I have tried to avoid all of my life. A clumsy, unappealing video game, this version manages to screw up everything that made *Civ 2* palatable.

While the basic principles and game mechanics remain intact, everything else is a mess. The graphics hark back to the days of *Civilization* on the SNES, and the music is a far cry from CD quality. It can be a major chore just trying to discern what units are which, and which types of resources are located on each grid.

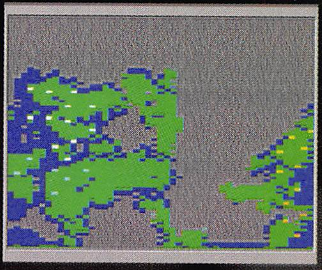


The FMV sequences that accompany the Wonders of the World and the council are up to par, as is the throne room screen, but these are only of interest to first time players.

Also excruciating is the loading time that accompanies the computer's turns as well as the world set-up time. Maybe first-timers won't notice, but anyone who is used to the PC and Mac versions will want to scream.

It pains me to say this, but this is one *Civ 2* that is completely devoid of anything even resembling enjoyment. Maybe this is just the over-reaction of a *Civ 2* fanatic, but somehow I doubt it. I think all gamers are going to be turned off by this title. *EN*

The power of PlayStation?



This would be the World Map. Anyone remember that Atari 2600 game, *Adventure*? Ouch...!



The graphics should be more than just utilitarian. RAM issues or not, I should at least be able to discern the units.



It can be annoying trying to navigate the many menus. This game should've utilized the analog stick.



The space race just isn't what it used to be...

R REVIEW

PlayStation

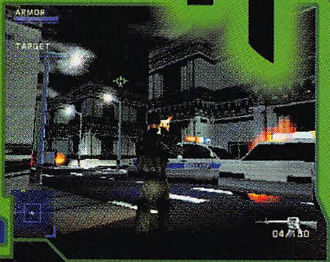
DEVELOPER - ACTIVISION	# OF PLAYERS - 1
PUBLISHER - ACTIVISION	DIFFICULTY - ADJ.
FORMAT - CD	AVAILABLE - NOW



EL NIÑO
Not for the civilized...


THE "KIDS" ARE BACK!
Race your friends in the improved multiplayer mode and find out who really is King of the mountain!
New control interface allows for insane trick combinations!
Find the all-powerful Dragon Board, plus 17 others to speed your way down the slopes!
Use over 10 ingenious power-ups to get ahead of the pack!
Race on a multitude of terrains! Such as underwater, uphill, and Outer Space!
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Only For NINTENDO 64
Designed For N64 Rumble Pak
1-4 Player/Simultaneous
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Syphon Filter







When I first saw this game at E3, I wasn't that impressed. The colors were washed out and the control was questionable. Besides, Sony couldn't have picked a more inappropriate level to showcase and its closest competition, *Metal gear Solid*, had already created a major buzz. Besides, what kind of name is *Syphon Filter*, anyways; at least *Metal Gear Solid* was recognizable. *Syphon Filter* sounds like something you put in a fish tank.

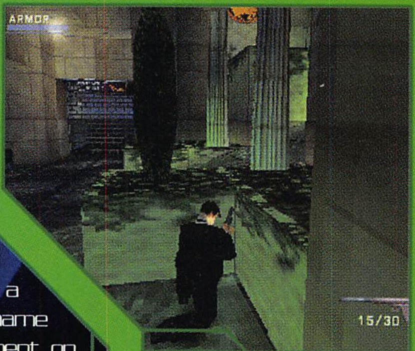
"Review this game," ordered ECM, Ringmaster of the Monkeys. I was bummed; every game I had to play this month had sucked. I was in for a big surprise, though, because *Syphon Filter* turned out to be one helluva title. In fact, I'm totally confused as to why 989 Studios hasn't pumped this game up more; it is clearly the best title they have released, since their inception.

You play Gabriel, an undercover operative (no doubt employed by those who work in the Corridors of Power. Don'tcha just love that expression? I can't possibly think of anything more vague and trite) working in conjunction with local authorities to stop a series of terrorist activities, led by some guy name Rhoemer. He's a first-rate crazy and is hell-bent on threatening humanity with bombs filled with a deadly virus (kinda like Castor Troy, in *Face-Off*). While they may be doing many of us a favor by eliminating politicians and the Redskins, many would lament the loss of Juan Howard. It's time for action. Besides, this is only beginning. Rhoemer has other plans, as well...

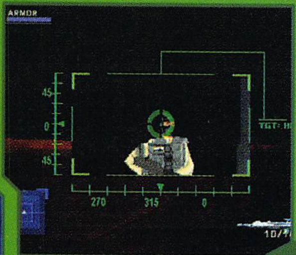
Each level in *Syphon Filter* is broken down into a series of objectives. It is imperative that they be done in order and many won't be revealed to you until certain junctures of your mission. Much like *Metal Gear Solid* or *Mission: Impossible*, these objectives range from disarming bombs to liquidating suspects and rescuing hostages. There is this great sequence where you have to save two hostages kneeling on the ground, execution-style, with guns to their temples. You need to make a clean head shot on the assassin before he can kill the prisoners. Fun stuff.

This adventure will take you to many locales, outside of D.C.. You will find yourself dodging bullets in a New York Museum, blowing up military compounds in Kadzakistan and chasing terrorists to... well, I'll let you find out *that* for yourselves. This is one story that interests, as it unfolds, so I wouldn't want to ruin it for you.

The first thing that will come to mind, while playing *Syphon Filter* is how great it looks. The texture mapping, high frame

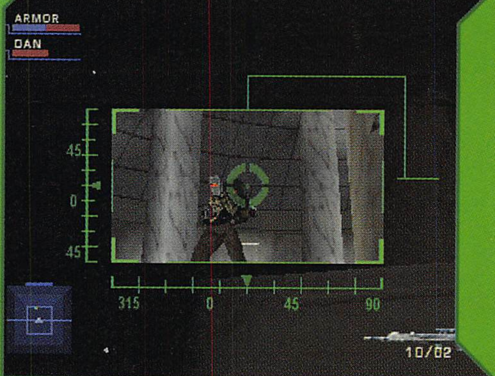


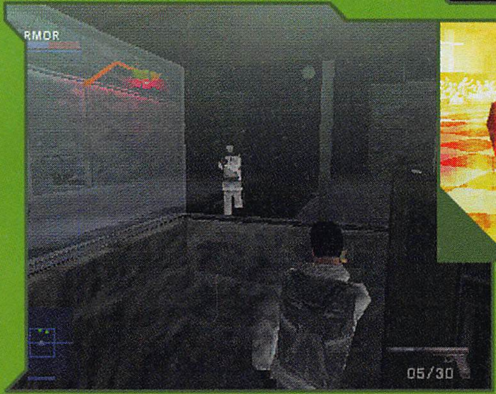
















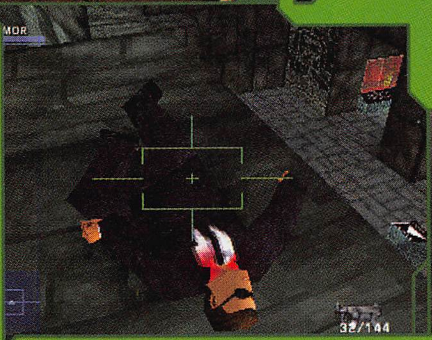
rate and smooth motion capture make each character look very lifelike, an illusion made much better by the amount they bleed when you riddle their bodies with M-16 bullets (or hit them, point-blank, with a shotgun blast). To compliment the beautiful looks, developers included some first-rate control and play mechanics. Every action that Gabriel can perform is easy to execute; so easy, in fact, multiple actions can be undertaken with little effort. Just wait until you are using your sniper function, while kneeling behind a crate, leaning around a corner and firing; now that's what I call using the controller!

Much like a movie, the game wouldn't be complete, or have the impact, without some top-notch sound. *Syphon Filter* delivers. Not only does it have some good background music, the sound effects are amazing. Every gun's report is easily recognizable (something you'll need to pay attention to, on later levels. Know your enemy's weapon and better understand how to kill him) and all of the environmental sounds are dead-on. Always a plus is voice acting that actually *works*! Your nemesis and his cronies sound convincing in their chatter, and some of the one-liner they utter excellent. 'You'll need a bigger gun than that, Logan," muses one of the bosses.

To my delight, I also discovered that just about everything can be interacted with (or should I say, most stuff will blow up when shot?). Glass shatters, lights can be extinguished and bullet holes will remain where you leave 'em. There are practical applications to some of these, though. For instance, you may need to aim and shoot off a lock, or snipe a control box from a great distance. Seemingly drawn-on background items are, in fact integral parts to the completion of your mission.

Syphon Filter is a masterpiece. A strong story that is well paced and lush with action and strategy, it will appeal to both adrenaline junkies and espionage freaks. Strong enemy AI and a multitude of weapons and items round out what may be the runaway sleeper hit of 1999. *Metal Gear* what...? ***EN***








R REVIEW | PlayStation

DEVELOPER - EIDETIC	# OF PLAYERS - 1
PUBLISHER - 989 STUDIOS	DIFFICULTY - MODERATE
FORMAT - CD	AVAILABLE - NOW



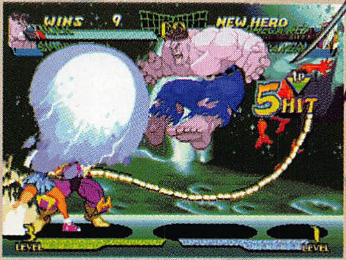
EL NIÑO
Sony's 800lb Gorilla.








One of the hardest jobs of a video game editor is attempting to review a game that, in all fairness, you're not all that fond of. And what makes this job even harder is knowing that a company's previous outing of the same game, but on a different system, was literally a hundred times better. But does that mean that in this case, *Marvel Vs Streetfighter* on the Playstation is not even worth checking out, especially if you're a fan of the *Vs* series? Well, after playing it a bit and having just been dazzled by the import version of *SFA3*, I have to admit I'm a little disappointed in Capcom's ability to port *MVSF* to the PSX.





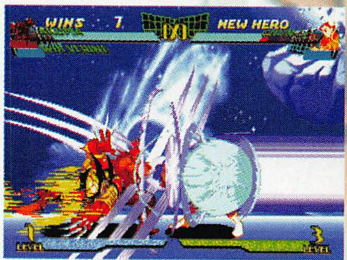
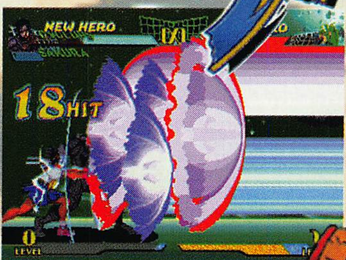
Again though, I must remember that there are plenty of gamers out there who are not familiar with the Saturn version of this game, and for that matter may not even have checked out *MVSF* in arcades. And, it is those people who I generally believe will be the one's that will undoubtedly approach this game with the least amount of criticism and possibly even receive it with open arms.

First off, the animation, which I believe was one of the *VS* series strongest selling points, has taken a turn for the worse this time around. Why? I'm really not sure, when you take in account just how much animation was included in the home version of *SFA3*. As well, the loading time could have been made a lot shorter, although most Capcom fighters (with the exception of *Alpha 2* and *3*) on the PSX do tend to suffer from a bit of the old loading death... sad that Capcom never found a way to include some sort of RAM upgrade like they did with the Saturn. Who knows, perhaps Capcom will find some way to utilize the upcoming PDA for the PSX as a kind of RAM expander... well a bit of wishful thinking can't kill a person, can it? If you work for ECM, it can.

MARVEL SUPER HEROES VS. STREET FIGHTER




As far as gameplay goes, though, *MVSF* does manage to deliver the same smack-down action as its




arcade counterpart. Sure, like *X-men vs. SF* you still can't switch between your characters during rounds (your second character aids only in Supers and counters) but come on, there was a time when noone thought conversions of this caliber were even possible... remember the heyday of *SF* on the SNES?

OK, so *MVSF* isn't a perfect translation, and yes it may be lacking in more than a few departments, but both fans of the *Vs* series and of fighting games in gereral should still have a great time beating the hell out of each other in this one... mom would be proud! *F*



R REVIEW | PlayStation

DEVELOPER - CAPCOM	# OF PLAYERS - 1-2
PUBLISHER - CAPCOM	DIFFICULTY - ADJUSTABLE
FORMAT - CD	AVAILABLE - NOW

UNDER CONSTRUCTION

FURY
Dreams don't die... except when you're lacking in RAM.



Bomberman Fantasy Race

Hard-core Bomberheads, it is a sad day... the days of 2D Bomberman are long gone. Hudson hasn't given up on our favorite hero, instead they're taking him on a world tour if you will: *Bomberman Wars* ventured into the realm of RPGs; *Bomberman 64* braved the isometric world of *Poy Poy*-like multi-player mayhem; *Bomberman Hero* let him loose in a pseudo-3D action/adventure with fancy gadgets; and *Bomberman World* was just... <shiver>. Hudson's latest offering takes the franchise to the racing circuit... only we're not talking *Gran Turismo* here. Essentially, *Bomberman Fantasy Race* aspires to be *Mario Kart* on the PlayStation.

Some of the elements which *BFR* 'borrows' from *MK* are red shells (in the form of rocket-powered, heatseeking bombs), randomly cycling powerups, the 'guy who puts you back on the road if you fall off,' and the infamous 'it's good to be in 2nd place' style of 'catch-up' racing. Let me amend that previous statement to "it's good to be in last place," because if you're in 2nd place in *BFR*, you're also in the midst of four people throwing bombs at you. Whether it's the leader tossing bombs backwards or the last guy bringing the heat from behind, there's plenty of bomb-blasting excitement to go with the racing.

Visually, *Bomberman Fantasy Race* isn't the sweetest piece of eye candy out there... but then again, *Bomberman* and *Mario Kart* were never about graphics... it was all about gameplay. Though *BFS* borrows a lot from *MK*, one major element is missing — the skillful power slide. There is a jump button in *BFS*, but the kangaroos get quite a bit of air, rendering a powerslide out of the question. Thus, 90 degree turns in this game can only be negotiated by slowing and turning.

Another questionable characteristic is the "it's good to be 2nd" mentality. When you're trailing the pack, you'll receive the best powerups (such as stopping time) when it should be 'random.' But when you're leading the pack, the powerups all become lethal to you (reversing your controls or making your kangaroo stop and relieve himself).

Hudson is doing a fine job of fleshing out the world of Bomberman. *Fantasy Race* introduces Bomberman currency and a Bank. Much like *Gran Turismo*, earning cash plays a big part in gaining entry to other tracks, buying more kangaroos (at least 10 available), and purchasing items. There's also a vs mode available.

So there you have it, while *BFR* isn't destined to be a console classic like *MK*, it's the only thing like it on the PlayStation (unless you consider *Twisted Metal*, but that's not quite the same). For what it's worth, *Bomberman Fantasy Race* is the best Bomberman on 32-bit, but we'd rather see a really good multi-player Bomberman... Help me, Hudsonsoft. You're my only hope! ***E***

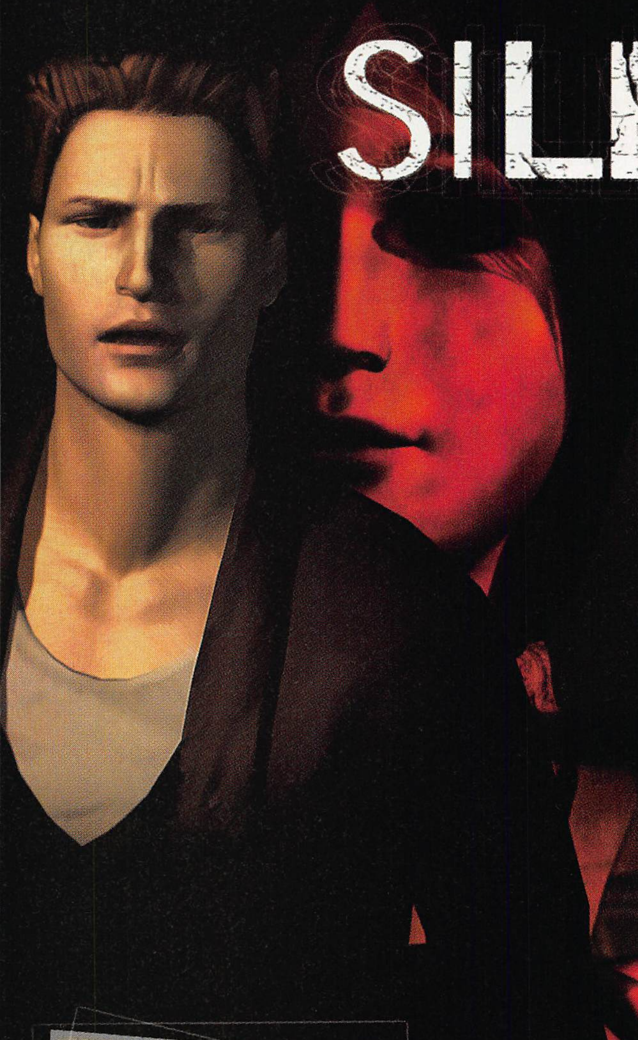
R REVIEW — PlayStation

DEVELOPER - HUDSON	# OF PLAYERS - 1-2
PUBLISHER - ATLUS	DIFFICULTY - MODERATE
FORMAT - CD	AVAILABLE - NOW



EGGO
"What's next... a Bomberman Fighting Game? Hey, don't write that down! I was only kidding!"

SILENT HILL







Hidden beneath the spectacle of *Metal Gear Solid* at Konami's E3 booth last year was a small game which people only talked about in hushed whispers. But one whisper led to two... then three... and soon everybody was saying the same thing: *Silent Hill*, **the** sleeper of E3. Now, it's review time and the game still seems shockingly untalked about — a mere hiccup in the wake of *MGS*... almost an afterthought... but it has potential to tear down an empire.

Don't be surprised if *Silent Hill* ends up flying off shelves faster than dealers can re-stock. After all, it borrows many elements from the incredibly popular *Resident Evil* series. And at first glance, you'll be tempted to write it off as nothing more than a clone of Capcom's breadwinner, but that judgment would be both hasty and wrong.

Here's what *SH* owes to the father of 32-bit Survival Horror: most of the weapons (the knife, handgun, and shotgun are all familiar), the 'fitting the block into the same-shaped hole' puzzle, and the 'town overrun with monsters bit.'

But that's only half the story, Konami wants to tear down the genre and rewrite it before our very eyes with *Silent Hill*. Here are the innovations it brings to the table: 3D environments, a mobile camera, darkening effects, fake scares, multi-part puzzles, shooting while walking, and hair-raising sound.

Unlike *RE's* polygonal characters walking on pre-rendered, 2D backgrounds, *SH* has 3D characters interacting in 3D environs. It seems like a trifle, but a polygonal environment allows for a mobile camera, which is huge for a game of this nature. Here's an example: Harry Mason walks into a new room and the camera is perched in the rafters, looking down on the action. As he walks by, the camera turns to follow him, never once cutting away from the action... so now you're seeing





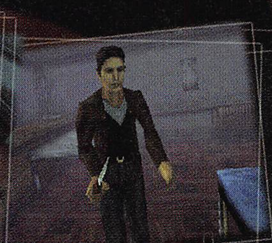
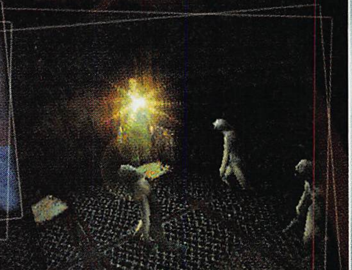










Harry's back as he walks away. What that simple trick does is make cinematography possible. If Harry walks around a bookshelf, the camera follows him around the corner, like a straggler tagging along, thus leaving the gamer in suspense and temporarily blinded.

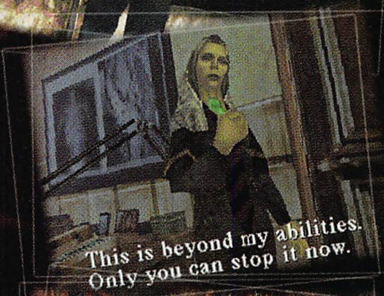
Don't mistake this for a 'camera issue'... everything in *Silent Hill* is done to develop atmosphere, and it's all done very well. The programmers also did a great job of hiding elements. I call it "darkening effects" as opposed to "lighting effects." Take a look at the screenshots and you'll see darkness and fog everywhere, hindering your vision. **Not** showing everything certainly messes with a person's paranoia and fear of the dark. I'm telling you, play this game alone in the dark to fully appreciate it.

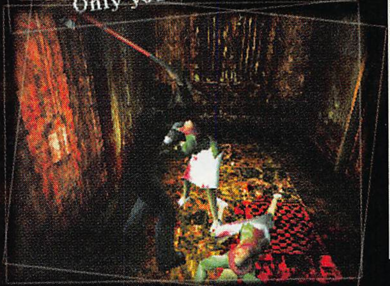
There's no question *SH* is like a horror movie and isn't for the faint of heart. There's bloody chains and hooks hanging from the ceiling a la *Hellraiser*. There's fake scares like the shadow jumping out at you... which turns out to be a cat. There's distinct music when monsters are around (...and when the music plays, but you can't find the monster... <shiver>). There's the rush of adrenaline as you pull the trigger on a shotgun while walking backwards... retreating while dropping monsters left and right.

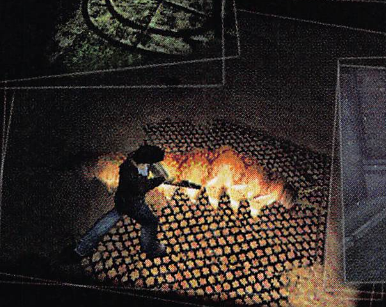
At first, I couldn't decide whether I liked *Silent Hill* more than *Resident Evil 2* (I'm approaching very dangerous ground here). Sure the game was more cinematic and scarier, but was it <gasp> **better** than *RE2*?!? And then I came across it, the element which made my decision easy... puzzles. One area which *RE2* paled in comparison to the original was the problem-solving. The first *Resident Evil's* puzzles made you think (sheesh, I can't tell you how long I was stuck on that 'examine the book to find the medallion' bit... ugh!). While a kid who could stick a square building block into a square hole could solve the majority of *RE2's* 'mind-benders,' *Silent Hill* is more like the first *Resident Evil* than the second when it comes to brainteasers. All I gotta say is "piano puzzle" — it took an hour's worth of thought and the mighty thinktank that is Dangohead (that's quite a large cranium) and I to solve that friggin' monster... but we did it (and we have the scribbled pages of failed ideas to prove it).

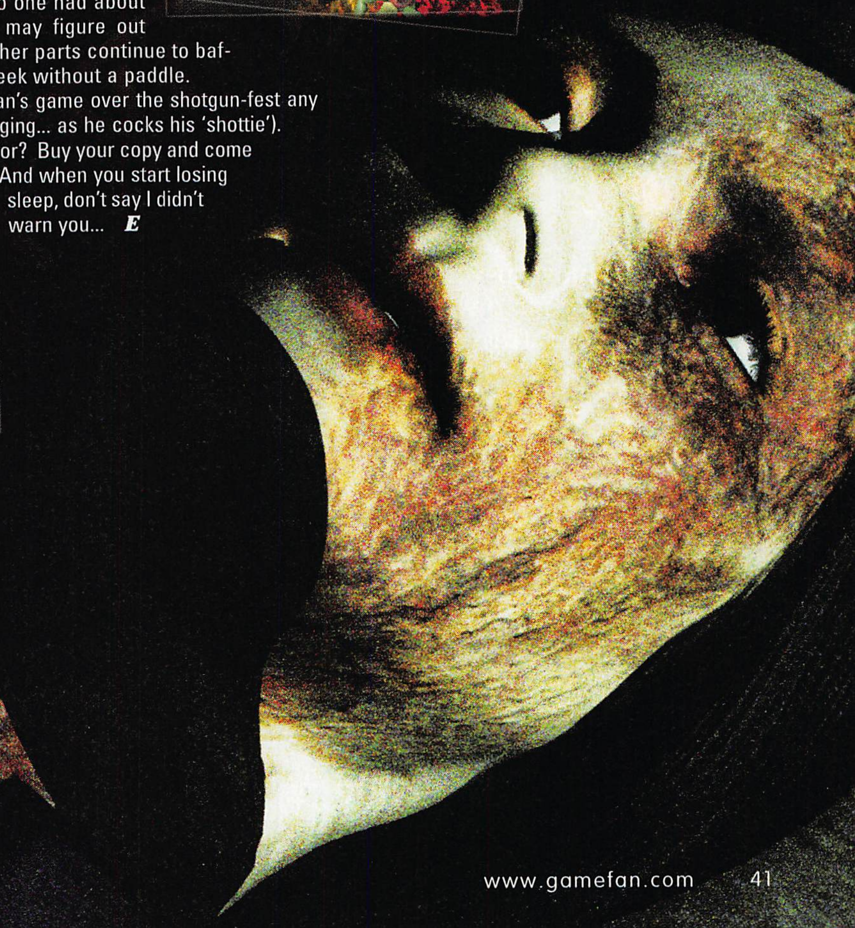
Sure, *SH* has the same "fit the block into the hole" puzzles that *RE2* beat us over the head with. BUT the *SH* puzzles usually have an added element, such as figuring out exactly where each of the four square blocks are supposed to go among those four square slots. That's what I like most about the puzzles in this game — they're challenging and have multiple parts (that piano one had about three parts). Sure you may figure out one section, but if the other parts continue to baffle... then you're up a creek without a paddle.

I'll take the thinking man's game over the shotgun-fest any day (I can hear ECM cringing... as he cocks his 'shottie'). So what are you waiting for? Buy your copy and come down with a '3 day flu.' And when you start losing sleep, don't say I didn't warn you... ***E***







R REVIEW

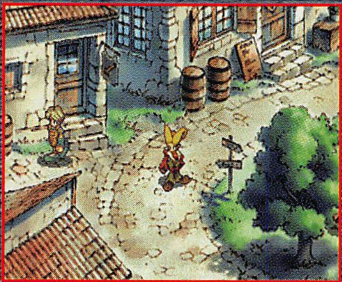
PlayStation

- DEVELOPER - KONAMI
- PUBLISHER - KONAMI
- FORMAT - CD
- # OF PLAYERS - 1
- DIFFICULTY - MODERATE
- AVAILABLE - FEBRUARY

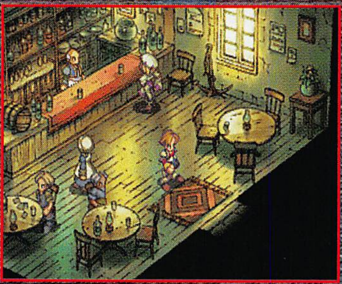


EGGO
SH – the new way to spell Survival Horror.

SAGA FRONTIER 2

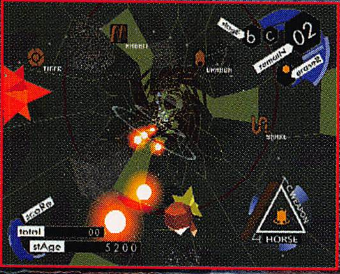




The sequel to Square's semi-hit RPG, SaGa Frontier is almost here! And it's...watercolored? Yep, looks like the big 'S' is going for a new look, and from what we've seen so far it's more than welcomed. Will fans be able to cope with the new look, or will they be too busy playing FF8 to care?!

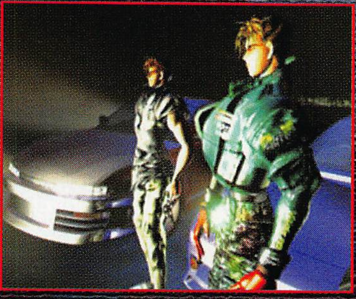
INTERNAL SECTION

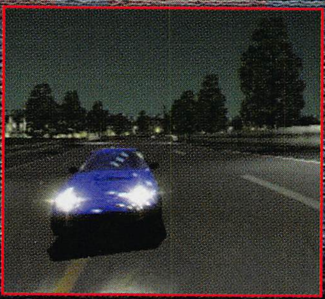
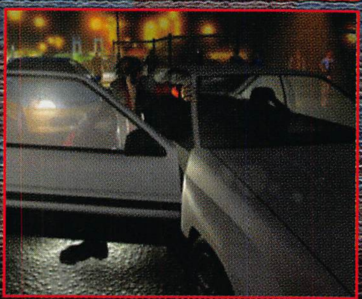





By far, the most psychelidic shooter ever created, Internal Section follows the 'Monster Rancher' theme, where your own music CDs help create the action. Silky smooth graphics, morphing enemies and fantastic lighting effects are only the beginning to this trippy shooter, also from Square.

DRIVING LAGOON



Ok, first they blend RPGs with fighters (Tobal) and now they're mixing RPGs and Racers? Square sure knows their stuff, as Driving Lagoon looks fantastic. In fact, from the video we've seen, the racing scenes are on par with Gran Turismo...no small feat! The action revs up soon, stay tuned!!

Do You Have An IRRITATING STICK?

The ultimate action puzzle game comes to the PlayStation® game console! Test your skill and nerves against some of the most diabolical 3D mazes ever to hit a video screen. Based on a wildly popular Japanese TV program, **Irritating Stick** is addictive, entertaining and **IRRITATING!!!**

One Player, Two Player or even a Tournament Mode with up to Eight Players; **Irritating Stick** features virtually unlimited 3D mazes that can be created in the Edit Mode, as well as three distinct courses each containing several of the most mind boggling challenges you've ever faced in a video game. You can even set up special "Irritants" to further complicate your competitor's life, but remember; turnabout is fair play!



EVERYONE E CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

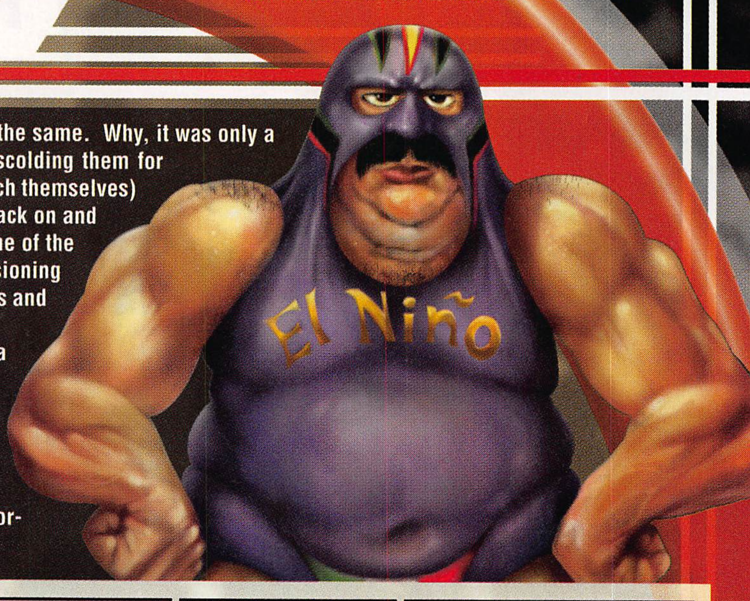
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PlayStation ®

GameFan Sports

"...the more things change, the more they stay the same..."



It's amazing how the more things change, the more they stay the same. Why, it was only a month ago that I was taking pot shots at the NBA players, scolding them for being a bunch of babies (while, incidentally, producing a bunch themselves) and costing the fans the 1998-99 season. Now the season is back on and I'm still taking pot shots at them. They may have salvaged some of the season, but they have scrapped many a fan's loyalty, disillusioning even the most naive (I saw some kids trading in their Air Jordans and Pennys for the newest Pete Sampras shoe... no seriously.

The big money players proved once again that they are a bunch of snivelling jerks, with few exceptions. What I found startling was who those exceptions were. To see Shaq actually distance himself from the Player's Association and criticize his peers was a beacon of hope for those cynics out there, like myself. I expected Grant Hill, Kobe Bryant and Jayson Williams to make a stand, but Shaq?! Maybe now I'll forgive him for *Shaq-Fu* and *Steel* (well, maybe not *Steel*).

It would seem that the 989 guys must have been members of the NBPA, and likewise on strike, because there is still no *NBA ShootOut '99* in sight. Maybe this whole NBA mess was an elaborate scheme, planned so that *ShootOut* could ship at the beginning of the season. Based on that notion, they'd still be way late...

You'll not be too happy with this month's crop of sports games. It is one sorry state of affairs when the best game I play all month is six years old. Only *Shadowrun* (which I reviewed for Graveyard) managed to make me smile. All of the sports titles left me listless. I can't wait until baseball season.

Joe Kidd was recently telling me that Virtual Concepts' football title, for the Dreamcast, is shaping up nicely. It will still be a while before he can release any pics, but he assures me it's cool (and he is a tough customer).

To make up for all of the time I was forced to agonize through this month's reviews, I was thrilled to finally get *Slap Shot* on DVD. One of Paul Newman's best and the king of sports comedies, *Slap Shot* is a must for any fan or lover of sports movies. Now if I could only get ahold of a copy of *Ed* and *Major League 3: Back To the Minors*...

I feel it is important to say right now that Pete Caroll, coach of the New England Patriots, should be fired. While it wasn't his fault that the Pats crumbled in the post-season (they were decimated by injuries), he made so many idiotic calls, through the season, that I feel he should be booted out of New England. Hey Pete, I hear Bill Buckner needs a roommate...

That's all I've got to say except that I wish the Kings and Bruins much luck in the second half of the NHL season.

—*El Niño*

Well, it actually is a *little* better than last year's version. I'm sorry folks, but Konami Sports is dropping faster than the Russian ruble. Once again marred by crummy gameplay, *NBA In The Zone '99* is the best reason I know to buy *NBA Courtside* (except, maybe, next to that FOX hoops game... yikes, does Murdoch know about that game?).

G	C	P	M	O	
6	5	5	4	4	58



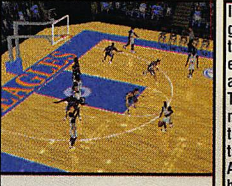
NBA In the Zone '99
Nintendo 64
Konami Sports

Konami needs to fire the coach of their NBA *In the Zone* team. Last year's game was bad and this years game hasn't improved at all. Even though the development team has had extra time to tweak this title, because of the strike, they seemed to get nothing done. The ball physics are terrible and the graphics are blurry. The way the players move in transition down the court is laughable.

G	C	P	M	O	
5	5	5	5	4	50

NCAA Final Four '99 is a solid title worthy of any college hoop fan's notice. The awkward motion capture and lack of options (compared to *March Madness*), however, make it no more than a bridesmaid in the latter's party. It would be important to state, though, that those who swear by *ShootOut* might consider this a better product. Not this guy. Extra points for commentary.

G	C	P	M	O	
8	7	7	8	6	71



NCAA Final Four '99
PlayStation
989 Studios

I liked the arcadier feel of this game more than the wrestler to my left. Easier to steal, easier to score... it makes for a lot of fun when you rent it. The motion captured spin moves and pull-up, stutter steps are sweet to watch, although the graphics, commentary, and free throwing leave you wincing. And last I checked, I thought Lute Olson's hair was black, not white...

G	C	P	M	O	
7	8	8	7	6	81

There really needs to be a good fishing game on the PlayStation (and, no, I'm not being sarcastic). This isn't it, unfortunately. *Fisherman's Bait* almost succeeds, but the fact that it is an arcade syle game costs it big points. Fishing is meant to take time, not be rushed through. If you're going to do that, at least make it exciting and fish for shark and barracuda, or something...

G	C	P	M	O	
6	6	3	5	6	61



Fisherman's Bait
PlayStation
Konami Sports

This game looks bad, plays bad and isn't that much fun. The game to which I measure all fishing games against is *Super Black Bass*. That game rocked. In this game the fish physics stink. The fish don't even fight that much. This game needs some serious work my. If you decide you want to bring this game into your gaming boat. Rent it first or you might find yourself snagged.

G	C	P	M	O	
4	4	4	4	4	42

It isn't exactly what I would have asked for, but it sure is better than the original. The K-1 is a cool license and these combatants are fairly charismatic despite being totally unknown to most. There just aren't enough moves and the frame rate needs work. With the many savvy gamers out there, now, better AI is also imperative. Maybe the third time will be the charm...

G	C	P	M	O	
7	6	6	6	8	70



K-1 Revenge
PlayStation
Jaleco

Woah... what the heck am I doing here, you ask? Well, owing to my fighting expertise, has kindly allowed me to shed some light on *K-1*. And trust me, this title could've been a contenda', but with choppy animation and repetitive AI, *K-1 Revenge* can't compare to some of today's 3D fighters. As a simulation fighter, it's pretty cool and better than the first... let's hope 3rd time's the charm.

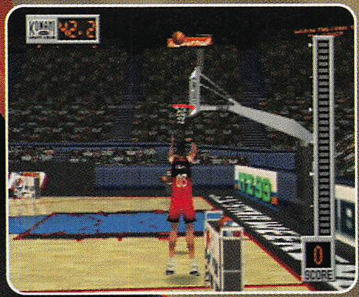
G	C	P	M	O	
7	8	7	6	7	73

NBA In The Zone '99

Nintendo 64 | R Review | Developer: Konami | Publisher: Konami | Available: Now | # of Players: 1-4









What a difference a year makes... or not. Last year both Bubba and I went to town on this game for its crummy everything. I had hoped to be able to give the "Look How Far They Have Come" speech, but instead I have to rifle through my note cards and find the "They Should Have Listened To Me" speech instead.

NBA In the Zone '99 is another lackluster installment in a withering franchise. Where every other developer seems to be making progress, *In the Zone* seems to be slipping. While the graphics of such titles as *Live*, *ShootOut*, and *March Madness* are evolving into a more life-like form, *In the Zone*'s are devolving into *Double Dribble* abrasiveness. I seem to remember the first *In the Zone* sporting some sweet motion capture... where'd that go?

There are a couple of bright spots, though. One is the inclusion of the 1998 crop of rookies — a feat EA was unable to perform. The computer will also utilize its bench more effectively than in other titles, so I can surmise that the AI coaching is on the ball. Unfortunately, having a complete roster and a heads-up coach don't make up for poor commentary, stiff movement, and questionable play mechanics.

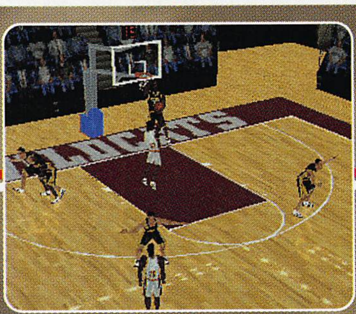
The questionable play mechanics are those very same ones that heavily flawed last year's title. Once again, the defender will always manage to get between you and the basket regardless to how slow the hand-checker is. Vlade Divac managed to block every lane to the hoop, on Antoine Walker — yeah right, not on his best day...

Also, in the paint, the double team is ever-present and, quite frankly, totally annoying. There's less double-teaming in college than in this game.

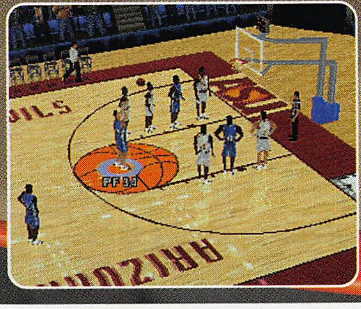
In the Zone '99 is just plain stale. When you consider that *Courtside*, and to a lesser extent, *Live 99* are available to you, there is no reason play this sub-par hoops sim. Konami needs to re-assess this franchise and either pull the plug or start from scratch. ***EN***

NCAA Final Four

PlayStation | R Review | Developer: 989 Studios | Publisher: 989 Studios | Available: Now | # of Players: 1-8









One of the only two legitimate college hoops sims available to the consumer (FOX's title just doesn't cut it), *NCAA Final Four '99* only need vie with *March Madness* for the top slot. Unfortunately, this year won't see *Final Four* crowned victor because it just doesn't measure up to EA's opus.

While there are many aspects of *Final Four* which make it a worthy college hoop sim, none of them are done better here than in *March Madness*. On top of that, the weak points in *Final Four* overshadow the stronger facets, stealing much of the game's thunder.

At first glance, the graphics seem to be right on par with the competition, with more realistic looking players than in the other college hoops titles. Upon moving though, it is clear that these players need work. The motion capture, while plentiful, lacks realism and hampers gameplay. The dunks and some of what should be the prettier moves, are left looking disjointed; there is simply no oomph here. The player movement is a bit slow as well, but this can be remedied by upping the speed in the options menu.

Sorely lacking is a dynasty mode, which is now a staple of other sports games. Without such a mode, the replay value isn't able to make the next big step. While this has little effect on multi-player games, it is devastating to the one-player experience.

Final Four has all of the other extras that are expected of a basketball game. All of the Division I teams are included, there is a 3-point shootout, and coaching options are plentiful. Developers have tried to implement a shooting meter to give gameplay a bit of depth, but it is little more than a distraction during play.

One area that *Final Four* excels in is audio. The play-by-play commentary is a welcome addition and adds much needed flavor.

NCAA Final Four '99 just falls short. Worth a rental, average graphics and some questionable gameplay keep it from rising to the level of *March Madness*. ***EN***

Rushdown

Developer: Canal + Available: 1st qtr.
Publisher: EA # of Players: 1-2



Just when you thought it was safe to assume Extreme Games were no more, here comes *Rushdown*. Get ready for even more mountain biking and snowboarding and, as if that wasn't enough for all of you Mountain Dew drinkin' "extremers," there's kayaking too. Sarcastic hyperbole aside, gamers will find a high-speed racing game that will challenge them in all three sports.

You can compete in all three events on 15 courses in a number of world-wide locales such as Europe, Africa, North and South America, and Asia. Experience mountain biking full-speed through the Amazon jungle; kayak down the rapid whitewater of the Colorado River, or snowboard down the slopes of Mount Kilimanjaro (hey, is that Hemingway's body over there?). As you make your way from continent to continent the level of difficulty increases.

Rushdown will offer three different modes of play: Championship, Arcade, and Multi-player. On each continent players can race against the local champion in all three sports. The only catch is you must win to advance. In the multi-player mode you can challenge a friend in either the championship or arcade events. You had better make sure you choose your gear wisely, as having the right equipment for each situation will make the difference between winning and losing. Players race against the clock in the Arcade mode to hone their skills before the ultimate showdown.

The game will support vertical or horizontal split screen action as well. Now, with any luck, we will have seen the end of "extreme" sports games. *VC*







NBA In The Zone '99

Developer: Konami Available: Spring
Publisher: Konami # of Players: 1-8

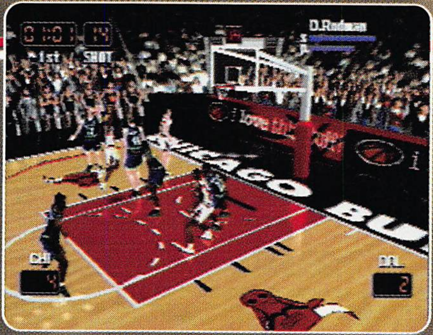
Unlike its Nintendo 64 counterpart, *In the Zone '99* for the PlayStation shows serious promise. Last year we were pretty tough on *In the Zone*; and for good reason: it sucked. However, major improvement has been made.

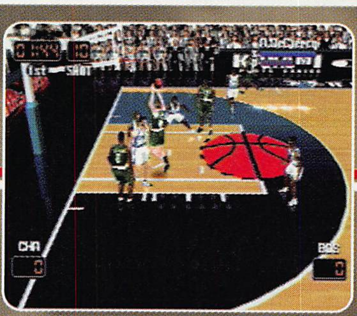
All of the standard stuff makes up the bulk of this game's options and modes. You've got your Tourney, Exhibition, and Season Modes; there's all of your basic options, from injuries on or off to shot handicapping. Every team is in there and all of the courts look as they should.

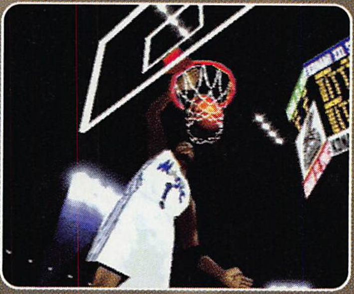
Last year's title had these things too, but where that title lacked good control, realistic gameplay and any hint of fun, *In the Zone '99* looks to have included it; win one for the gamers.

The motion capture is better, the polygon count appears higher and the speed of the game is comparable with *ShootOut*. That awful problem of not being able to drive to the hoop looks to have been addressed as well as the game AI.

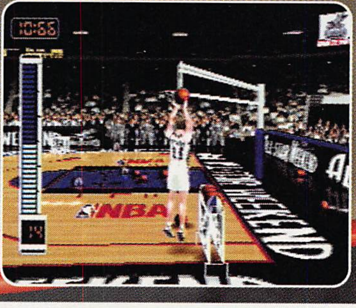
While it is still too early to exonerate *In the Zone '99* for all of the heinous crimes accused of its predecessor, it is clear to this sports gamer that major work has been done. Let's hope *In the Zone '99* will stand up to the test of extensive gameplay, when the review-able version becomes available. *EN*







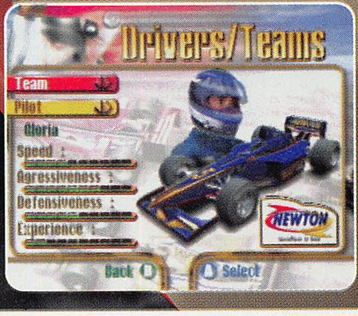




Monaco Grand Prix









Preview | Developer: UbiSoft | Publisher: UbiSoft | Available: Spring | # of Players: 1-2

Another Formula One game... hooray. A genre of racing so completely uninteresting to American gamers that the sheer number of these titles must be the source of some mystery. Formula One is to Americans like NASCAR or baseball is to Europeans...boring. I've never heard of the racing teams, the cars look silly and, (you can thank Psygnosis for this), they play completely uninspired.

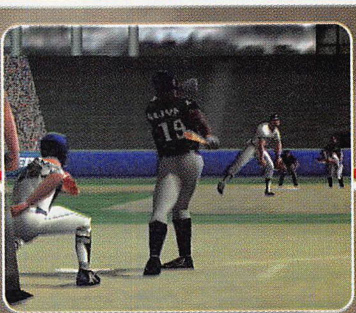
Now that I've knocked the sport, I'm going to knock this title. It is still an alpha, so I won't draw too many conclusions. The atrocious slowdown that occurs when many cars are on screen maybe correctable. Also, the total lack of personality and non-existent frame rate could be addressed, in the near future. I'll give them the benefit of the doubt.

There are a total of 16 available tracks and 11 racing teams, Each team has 2 drivers and the car characteristics are so weighted in the favor of some teams, you'll wonder why you'll race with anyone else.

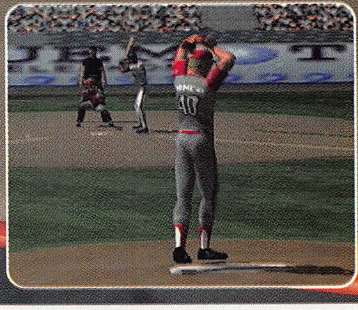
The graphics are actually pretty good and the driving physics (when there are no other cars around) are impressive. There are exciting options like multiple camera angles, career mode and, everybody's favorite– car customizing. Nothing like adjusting that gear ratio and shocks...

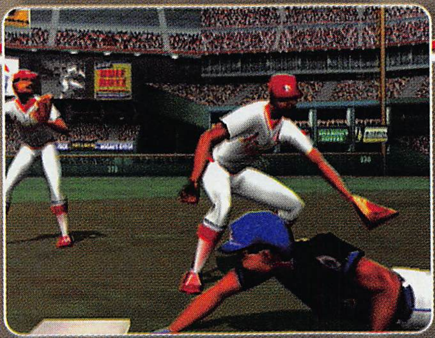
I am, of course, being unnecessarily flippant, but games like this very seldom manage to develop into anything worth playing. *Monaco Grand Prix* is just another title, in a long line of uninspiring drivel. A game like this will probably scream on Dreamcast (Ubi does have a knack making beautiful looking games) but if this alpha is any indication of how the N64 will end up playing, then it will probably suck. ***EN***

All-Star Baseball 2000









Preview | Developer: Iguana | Publisher: Acclaim | Available: Spring | # of Players: 1-2

The Boys of Summer are coming back! It seemed like only yesterday we were watching Sammy Sosa and Mark McGuire vie for the homerun record. Both of them broke it and the Yankees won back-to-back World Series. Now *that's* a season!

Derek Jeter, Yankee shortstop and *All-Star Baseball* pin-up, will not only be providing his likeness for the packaging but will also conduct a few interviews and provide scouting reports to help the *ASB 2000* development team get the many baseball nuances right.

Iguana has added more than 400 new motions including over-the-shoulder catches, and hook and swipe tags. You will also have the ability to break up double plays this season, although word is still out as to whether there will be a special Albert Belle animation for really laying on a hit.

The game will also include over 100 unique batting stances, from the open stance of Andres Galarraga to the home plate crowding of Jeff Bagwell. Not just the stances, but the homerun swings of some of the game's top sluggers have been added (Hmm... would that maybe include Sammy and Mark?). The standard four modes of play: Exhibition, Season, Playoff, and Home Run Derby round out your options this year. [El Niño's note: Whoa, those are some major options!]

One of the biggest concerns which gamers had with last year's version was the batter/pitcher interface. That issue has been addressed, resulting in less difficult at bats that maintain the art of the batter/pitcher contest.

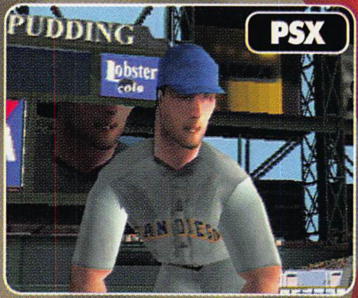
Roster management options, in an attempt to make the game mirror the real thing, will include multi-player trades and signing and releasing players. A create-a-player function has also been added [again, El Niño: Whoa, those are some major additions!]. ***VC***

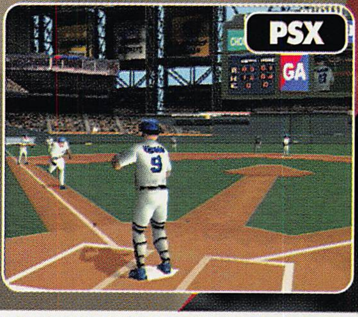
Triple Play 2000

N64 PlayStation **P** Preview — Developer: Trey Arch — Publisher: EA Sports — Available: Opening Day — # of Players: 1-2









It's almost that time of year again – Opening Day. With the ushering in of another life-bringing spring comes the beginning of the season for the Boys of Summer. For gamers, the release of the newest installment of *Triple Play* is just as important.

I've made no secret my waning opinion of this franchise, but I still remain optimistic. The last few years has seen a spike in the release of baseball sims, and a couple of those titles have firmly established themselves as contenders for best of the bunch. *Triple Play 2000* needs to recapture some of the lost glory. Adjustments have been made; strides taken. *Triple Play 2000*, I am pleased to say, looks to be back on the winning track.

Complaints about last year's game focused mainly on frame rate and scrolling. Not ones to ignore criticism, EA Sports has put major effort into increasing the frame rate, resulting in what it hopes will be some smoother gameplay. Also, the increase in camera angles to 75 will allow for a smarter, more dynamic presentation of the in-game action.

Taking a lead from other EA titles, *TP 2000* will include a Career option, along with the other basic modes, to allow you to build a baseball dynasty. Expect detailed control and depth for Career mode.

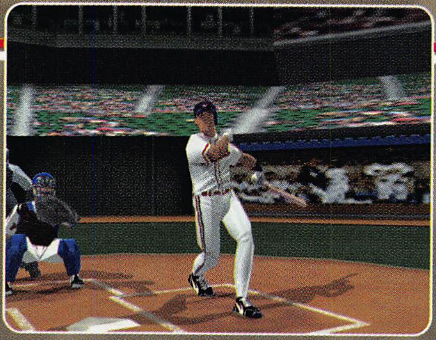
The two-man booth remains, as well as crowd chants and stadium sounds. The parks are all photo-realistic and meticulous work has been done to emulate the proper ball physics.

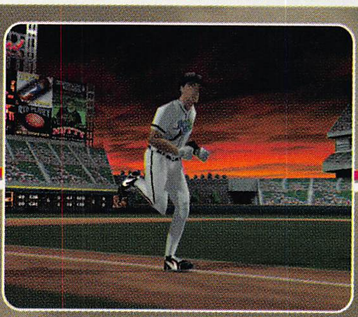
Some small changes to expect are facial animations (like in *Live 99*), more stats (1,300, in all) and more intuitive baserunning and batting. The N64 version will have a speedy arcade mode, and both titles will support analog.

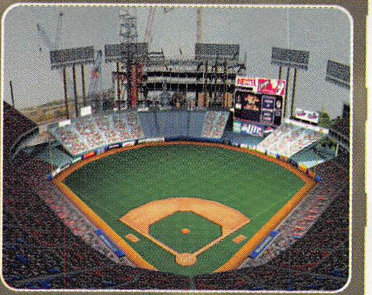
Expect *Triple Play 2000* to rise like a phoenix, this year. *EN*

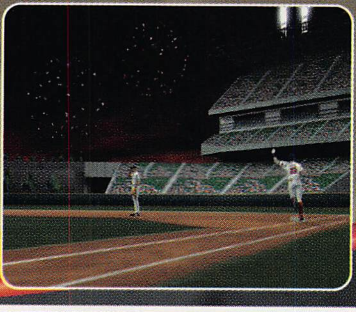
Baseball 2000

PlayStation **P** Preview — Developer: Interplay — Publisher: Interplay — Available: March — # of Players: 1-2









Some of you maybe wondering where this *Baseball 2000* game came from. It is actually the sequel to *VR Baseball '99*, but Interplay has decided to kill the VR line and go with just plain ol' Interplay Sports (no points for originality). So now *VR Baseball 2000* is just *Baseball 2000* (wouldn't it be funny if the logo were in black and white, PIL-style?).

For two years, now, I have said that this series is the best on the market. No one is listening, apparently, judging by the sales of *VR Baseball*, and that is a shame. It may not have had the best graphics and sound, but it had the best gameplay, AI and stat tracking. No excuses this year, for baseball fans, because *Baseball 2000* has undergone a major facelift, as well as gotten itself a voice.

The graphics are hi-res and the color palette has been expanded. The players will contain more polygons and the motion capture has been tweaked, including numerous signature batting stances and pitching wind-ups. Some little details are being worked out, but developers assure me that all will be polished to a fine sheen, for release. Also expect a frame rate that never drops below 27 frames.

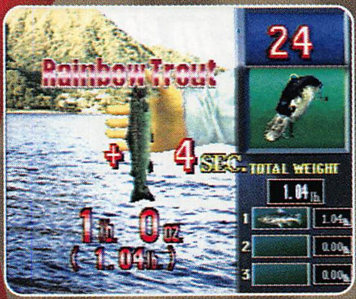
The commentary isn't on the level of *Triple Play*, but is accurate and lively, which puts it miles ahead of the faulty babble which accompanied last year's *MLB* title. No color man is included, but I think that too much emphasis is being place on something that has nothing to with the gameplay (ahem, EA).

Homerun derby has been spiffed up a bit, losing the annoying camera angle, and the menu interface is dramatically improved, making it easier to read the stats and make managerial decisions.

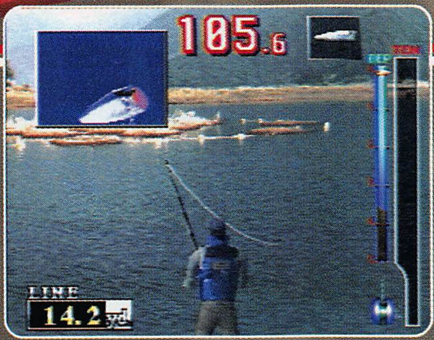
Interplay is taking great care with this title, and the alpha version shows it. *Baseball 2000*, once the spit and polish has been added, should remain the best title on the market. Now if only you people would go out and buy it... *EN*

Fisherman's Bait









PlayStation | Review | Developer: Konami | Publisher: Konami | Available: Now | # of Players: 1-2

Fishing games are a niche genre if there ever was one. I happen to love fishing games; let me take that back — I love *Super Black Bass* and all that resemble it. As for the rest of the fishing games out there (the coin-op *Get Bass!* excluded), they can best be summed up as de-boned and quite unoriginal. The same can be said of Konami's *Fisherman's Bait*; another painful reminder that the PlayStation is a brackish pond of fishing titles.

An arcade port, *Fisherman's Bait* seemingly has all the elements of a good fishing game, but it lacks a certain something (some might say it is gameplay). The backgrounds are quite unremarkable, as is the sound and presentation. The analog stick lends itself quite well to the control of the rod — a big plus — but the lack of action, save for cut-aways of the fish fighting, make this a total yawner.

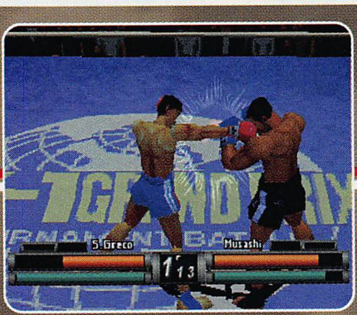
The coin-op presentation remains, making this a speed contest instead of a thinking man's fishing title. Laugh all you want, but half the battle in fishing is knowing your lures and knowing where to cast your line. The excitement of exploring each lake's shoreline and murky areas and searching out the best spots is totally lost here.

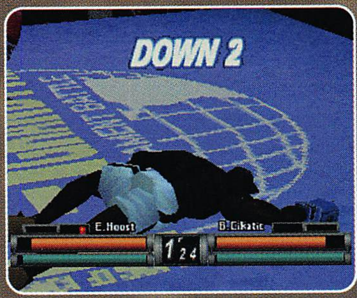
The cut scenes look good and the fish act quite life-like, but the lack of surface action on the main screen makes for little in the way of visceral pleasure. The few lures and even fewer fishing spots make this a very shallow title, which fishing gamers will grow tired of quickly.

A major pet peeve of mine (something that almost all fishing games are guilty of) is that a one pound fish has the capability of snapping your line. This is a total crock; no matter how hard that fish fights, he ain't breaking a 10lb, or even 5lb, test. I know the game needs to have drama, but this is the wrong area to create it.

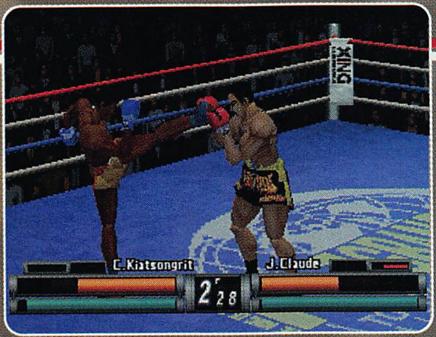
Fisherman's Bait fails to deliver, wasting a dynamic casting and retrieving mechanic on what looks to be a hastily put together fishing foray. ***EN***

K-1 Revenge









PlayStation | Review | Developer: Xing | Publisher: Jaleco | Available: Now | # of Players: 1-2

Since there are no good boxing games to speak of, a title like *K-1 Revenge* is a welcome sight. The sequel to the very boring *K-1 Arena Fighters*, *Revenge* manages to improve on every facet.

K-1 is a Japanese fighting competition pitting the best martial artists in the world, against each other. Unlike the UFC, no grapplers are present to muck-up the heavy beatings being doled out by the likes of South African thug Mike Bernardo, or bruiser Ernesto Hoost. All of the available fighters are actual participants in the K-1 challenge and have their own set of moves and fighting techniques.

Big complaints about the former title ranged from slow gameplay and bland graphics to few moves and poor AI. Not so in *Revenge*. While the frame rate and animations are minimal, the fighters look much more realistic and better mo-cap is on display.

The fighters are much faster this time around (no doubt helped by the lack of frames) and the control is a bit tighter. The number of available moves is still painfully lacking, but it is possible to string together some nice combos. Considering that this is a licensed title, with real-life combatants, I guess it would be inappropriate for them to be able to perform fireballs and crazy throws...

The AI is still not up to par with, say, a game like *Tekken* or *Virtua Fighter*, but is leaps and bounds better than such dreck as *Knockout Kings*. As long as you can land a solid kick to the head, for a knock down, it isn't too hard to outlast your opponent and then win on points; cheap, maybe, effective– yes.

One cool feature is the ability to customize AI as well as a players moves. This requires extra memory blocks and won't interest idle players, but those who manage to get into this game will most likely start fidgeting around with customizing.

K-1 Revenge, while far from an epic contest, manages to best its predecessor and offer fans of pugilism some mindless entertainment. Versus mode can be very fun, when you are pummeling a buddy, and Team Battle will give you a *King of Fighters*-style battle with multiple combatants. By all means check this game out. ***EN***

Japan Now!

Dreamcast sales rocket in Japan!

2:00 AM



Yes, 2 A.M.! Talk about sausage! Most people sat on cardboard boxes, and others camped out in groups complete with gas stoves! Geez!

7:00 AM



The store opens at seven on the dot. Could this be? It's the President of SEGA! "Thank you for your support! As good will, I will give the first DC away for free!" WHAT?!! DAMN!

7:30 AM



This lucky guy got the very FIRST Dreamcast ever to be sold in public in Japan! This photo also made every headline newspaper shot across the land of the rising sun... "Waaah..."

9:00 AM



One of the biggest retail stores in Japan, called LAOX, held this special event. The store owner came out to see how many more customers were lined up... <grin> Cha-ching! $$

11:30 AM



WHAT?! You sold over 500 units in less than five hours?! That's at least 100 units every hour!!! As you can see, these guys are standing in the street, yelling out that they have... "SOLD OUT!"

Sales for the Dreamcast have skyrocketed more than SEGA had expected! As a result, they had a major shortage of systems that retail stores couldn't even fill until the 1st of the year! This issue of Japan Now! brings this headline event to you as well as other small DC info, including a news section. (special thanks to MetalJack.)

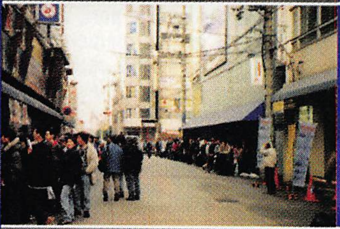
Of all of the game system launches in Japan, none had such an impact both emotionally and physically as the launch of the Dreamcast. Sega is indeed back on their feet, and the tales of retail horror will be told for generations to come...

As reporters were asking questions of some of the people waiting in line, they saw some different faces... Whaaaat?! A man from Alaska flew to Japan, camped out for three days, and finally was able to purchase a little bit of Sega history. "I was lucky.." he said, as the line was cut behind him... <yikes!> Uh oh...



DC in FUKUOKA

The retail chains in Japan are so huge, they're uh.... monstrous! Hey, when was the last time you had a corn & mayonnaise pizza from Domino's, huh? <hack!> Anyways, in Fukuoka, one of the biggest retail stores, "BEST," reported selling out of Dreamcast systems in less than 2 HOURS! One gentleman said, "I waited in line for four hours, just to see that the guy before me get the last DC!" Sorry, pal!



DC in OSAKA

This tale is a freakish one... Over 400 people in line for more than 12 hours!!!! They even stopped traffic on some streets because of the 'problem' they were having with the pedestrians...



DC in NAGOYA

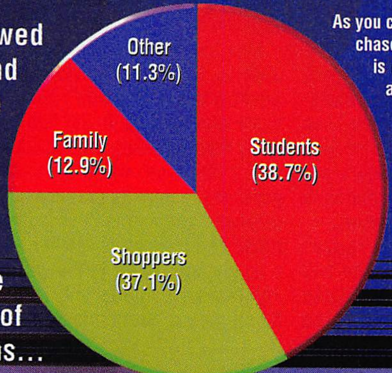
Although this store owner had mostly pre-orders, he had to post a sign for retail customers to let them know that ALL systems are gone! He also posted another sign (not shown), that read: "Sorry! We won't be getting any systems for one week because of the amount of pre-sold systems. Thank you!" What a nice guy...



DC in SAPPORO

Of all the scary and freakish stories, this one was the most subtle. This store employee had to verbally tell people that they had sold out and they were sorry. Later, he told reporters that he must have made a hundred children cry that day. <heh>

SEGA interviewed 100 people and asked them some questions about the launch of the Dreamcast and general subjects. This is the result of three of the main questions...

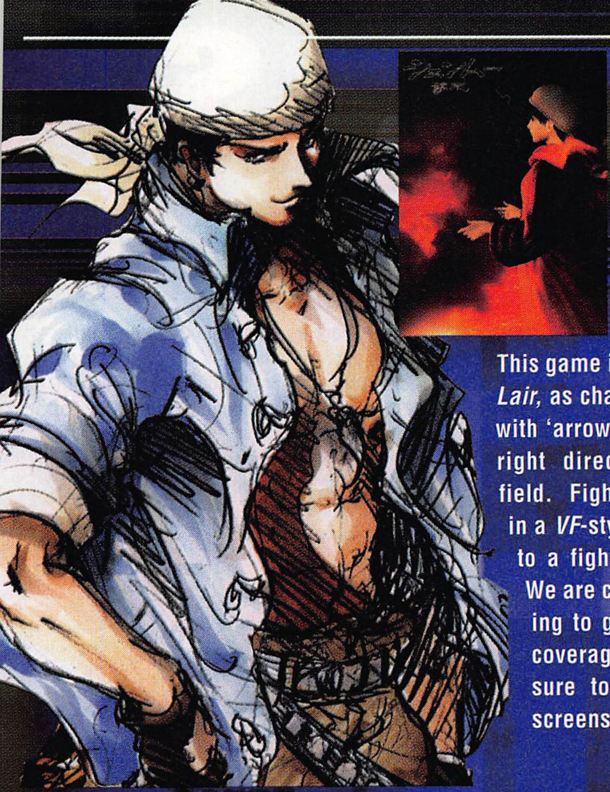


As you can see, the majority of the sales came from students. But the average age of people who made the purchase was approximately 23-25 years old. What does this mean? Simply put, the younger target audience is quoted "intimidated" by the new system's launch, and would rather wait until a title they 'liked' was available. This would make sense because games like *Virtua Fighter 3* didn't exactly have a Nintendo-style simplicity. Saying this, it does become a little clearer that *VF3* was more popular among the young adults, and that the 'typical' gamer's age was more in that age bracket's generation.

GAMES SOLD WITH THE DC	
1.) Virtua Fighter 3tb	(98)
2.) Godzilla Generations	(18)
3.) Pen Pen Trilcelon	(13)
4.) July	(10)

GAMES WANTED REALLY BAD
1.) Sega Rally 2
2.) Bio Hazard: Code Veronica
3.) Grandia 2
4.) Evolution
5.) Virtual On 2

Shen Mue: The 'new' era of RPGs





Formerly named *Project Berkeley*, *Shen Mue* is set to be released later on this summer. Sega's Yu Suzuki, head of the project, promises that *Shen Mue* will be 'different' in the RPG genre. This game is a little like *Dragon's Lair*, as characters are presented with 'arrows' to point them in the right direction on the playing field. Fighting is done somewhat in a *VF*-style as characters switch to a fighting plane in real-time! We are currently on the phone, trying to get an interview and exclusive coverage on Sega's next big hit. Be sure to tune in next month as we bring screenshots and the latest on *Shen Mue*!

The News Update

• At this time, Square is currently working on a 'sequel' to a game. The title of the game is currently unknown, but it is rumored to be *Seiken Denstsu 4* (*Secret of Mana*). The art director for the previous *Seiken Densetsu* said in an interview that, "I am not designing the character art for *Seiken*." <Oops?!> Well obviously it looks like Square *is* making a *Seiken* game. But on the other hand, sources say that it could be *Final Fantasy Tactics 2*! Whichever it is, Square had better bring it out now!

• A third installment of the *Mysterious Dungeon* series by Chun Soft, will be making a debut for the N64 later this year (Waka's note: I HATE THESE GAMES!). Could it be *Chocobo's Mysterious Dungeon 3*, or *Toruneko's Great Adventre 2*? Could you care?

• A DVD game machine is rumored to make an appearance at the Tokyo Game Show this Fall in '99. Sources say thay it is either going to be the Dream Song (see below) or the eagerly anticipated PlayStation 2! It could even be a new system that is yet to be announced! Woo-hoo!

• Sega's 'Dream Song' system has been confirmed to utilize the DVD format. In case you didn't know, the Dream Song is a karaoke-based system that Japan has been using for years. The machine is also said to be Dreamcast compatible, so you can play games and sing... uh... 'Japanese' songs on it.

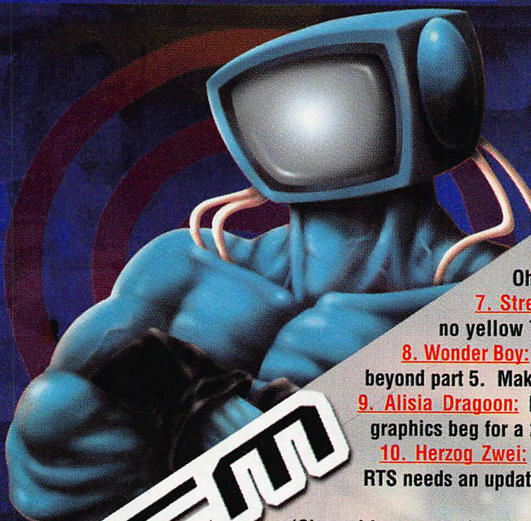
• Sony Computer Entertainment Japan has announced that they too, have a sequel RPG in the works. No title has been etched in stone, but it was said that it will most likely be *Arc the Lad III*, or *Wild Arms 2*.

• Namco has also announced that they may reveal *Tekken 4* at the Tokyo Game Show.

• SNK has announced that they will be releasing a color version of their already portable hit, Neo Geo Pocket. All current games that have been released in black and white are said to be fully compatible with the new system. The new system will be available in March, for approximately 5800 yen (60 bucks)!

In other news, SEGA currently posted a user database on their website for Dreamcast users to connect to and browse the Information Superhighway. On this site a questionaire is required to be filled out (if you are a DC owner), so SEGA can see what their customers think about their new system. As expected, DC owners use the internet feature on the DC because: 1.) It is much cheaper to purchase a DC than buying a PC. 2.) Since SEGA has a server for the DC consoles, all you pay is a one-time membership fee of 2800 yen (30 dollars) for monthly service (which is cheaper than most IP servers in Japan.) And finally, users get to challenge other players with the link feature across the world for excellent multi-link play!

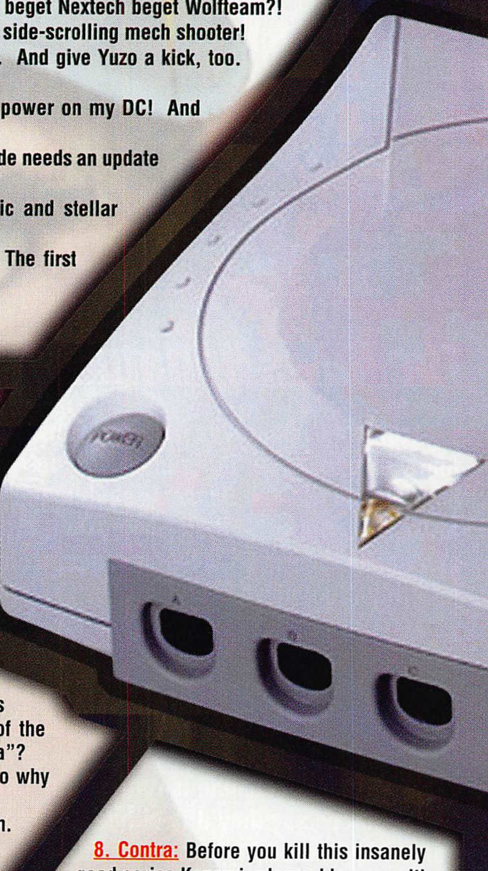
Dreamcast Wishlist



ECM

1.Chakan: About as hard-core as games got with one of the best endings ever. Give me a new one now!
2. Thunder Force: C'mon TS, give us a raging, hand drawn, TF on DC!
3. M.U.S.H.A.: Earth to Compile: we don't need anymore Puyo-Puyo, but we do need another *Aleste*.
4. Ecco: this one may actually exist... pray to the master of the briny deep.
5. Ranger-X: Wolf Team beget Gau beget Nextech beget Wolfteam?! Now give me a sequel to this awesome side-scrolling mech shooter!
6. Beyond Oasis: Get the lead out, Ancient. And give Yuzo a kick, too. Oh, and no polygons, please.
7. Streets of Rage: 2D, hand-drawn, SOR2-esque power on my DC! And no yellow T-shirts, please (get that boy some bleach).
8. Wonder Boy: One of the greatest action adventures ever made needs an update beyond part 5. Make it so, Sega, and don't forget to keep it 2D.
9. Alisia Dragoon: Perhaps GameArts' finest hour, blazing music and stellar graphics beg for a 2D update.
10. Herzog Zwei: 4-player split-screen and/or Internet power. The first RTS needs an update almost more than any other.

(Oh, and in case you're wondering, the above games are in no particular order — in spite of the numbering).
And besides these (I'm greedy), gimme *NiGHTS*, *Vectorman*, *Strider*, *Phantasy Star*, *Guardian Heroes*, *Gunstar Heroes*, *Dynamite Headdy*, *Radiant Silvergun*, *Shinobi*, *Dragon Force* (like the first one, not the sequel), *Silpheed* (oh the power), *Assault Suit Leynos* (a.k.a. *Target Earth*), *Lunar*, *Valis*, *Ristar*, *Rocket Knight Adventures*, *Bonk* (yes, *Bonk*) and an *X-Men* game based off the Genesis versions (reset trick and all!). And while you're at it, Sega, give me a couple of games that have good endings (call me crazy, but I like a fun ride to end with something that doesn't resemble Reubus after a long weekend of no showers and 3 cases of Pepsi, <shudder>). If I don't get at least 5 of these, there's no hope (probably no hope that any of them will be 2D, <bah!>).



DANGO

1. Shinobi: Give me the stuff that made *Revenge of Shinobi* so fantastic...and bring back that Yuzo guy to do the music.
2. NiGHTS: Bless us again, Yuji Naka!!!
3. Dragonforce: Same concept, but with over 400 troops on screen at a time!
4. Phantasy Star: Should I just have the millions of *Phantasy Star* fans sit on the front lawn of the White House and protest by singing, "Kumbaya"?
5. Legend of Oasis: Hey, Nintendo has *Zelda*.... so why can't the DC have Leon back in another adventure?
6. M.U.S.H.A.: Perhaps the best shooter ever on a console system.
7. Altered Beast: On the Genesis, it all began with this phrase..."Rise from your grave!"
8. Herzog Zwei: Screw *Warcraft*, *Starcraft*, and *C & C*, cuz they all must bow down to this grand-daddy of all real-time strategy games.
9. Zillion: I remember playing this baby so long ago, and hoping it would be reborn upon the next Sega system. Dreamcast? PLEASE SEGA PLEASE!!!
10. Bionic Commando: Sure, it was on the NES, and we all loved this game to pieces. So where is the next incarnation?

Among the above, I would love to see a *Guardian Heroes* with Internet multiplayer features. But more importantly, let's try to put more emphasis on gameplay rather than the blazing effects of which we know (e.g. Sonic Adventure) the DC is capable. Be it 2D or 3D, I've always trusted Sega with solid titles that look great but play better. With the wave of 3D games filled to the rim with eye-candy, as long as Sega can keep delivering, then there's a plumber and Bandicoot in some serious trouble.

TEETER

1. Castlevania: 3D's fine and dandy, but just imagine the possibilities of a fully 2D version...oh...
2. Shinobi: There's life in our friend Joe Musashi yet, give him back to us!
3. Y's: Hire Yuzo Koshiro for the soundtrack and I'm sold. Falcom, you owe it to the fans!
4. Golden Axe: *Revenge of Death Adder* — straight port? Who cares, just give it to us!
5. Space Harrier: No more pseudo 3D! Revive this classic immediately!
6. Vandal Hearts 2: Sprites and polys *can* co-exist peacefully! A sequel please!
7. MegaMan: Bring the Blue Bomber to the world of Dreamcast 2D power!
8. Contra: Before you kill this insanely good series Konami, please bless us with a superior 2D version! We've had enough 3D and we don't like it very much!
9. Streets of Rage 4: It's the sequel everyone's waiting for, even after the horrific third installment! Hey, we'll forgive you for that kangaroo incident!
10. Space Megaforce: this probably isn't gonna happen, but a 2D top-down sequel would be fantastic!

Like so many Sega fans of late, I was forced into hiding by system-flop after system-flop from one of my favorite companies. Now, as the new millennium approaches, there is finally a light at the end of the tunnel. A battle-weary Sega finds themselves back in the position of underdog, hoping for history to repeat itself. Allied with powerful comrades, will they rise once again to reclaim their former greatness? With any luck (and some savvy business arrangements), there's a chance.



Sitting around the GF offices one day, the editors got into a big rant session about the many titles you would have expected to make an appearance on Saturn, but never did. Games like Gunstar Heroes (despite Treasure's 'no sequel' policy), Phantasy Star, Streets of Rage, etc. We then got to thinking how it would be cool to give Sega a real good idea of what games we want to see on DC, so that they have a clear idea from the outset what the gamer wants. Armed with that thought in mind, we have for you our top ten picks (decided by each editor) for what we want to see on Dreamcast. Maybe this time around we'll get a fraction of what we want (we're willing to give Sega the benefit of the doubt — don't let us down!).

EGGO

1. Final Fantasy: Square is the 3rd party to have on board, and a *Final Fantasy* would sell systems. Besides, I'm not the biggest fan of *Saga Frontier*.
2. Castlevania: 2D with bitchin' music. It can be done, and it would be appreciated by all five of us left who still like 2D.
3. Dragon Force: 2D, 3D doesn't matter... as long as it has 100 guys, plays like *DF*, and has epic music.
4. Bomberman: As long as the multi-player is good, that's all I want.
5. Ultima: PC gamers have *Ultima Online* and *Everquest*, RPGs with online worlds you can virtually 'live' in. DC RPG players better have a modem game capable of ruining relationships.
6. Shinobi: Am I the only one out there who wants to see more of *Shinobi*?
7. another Treasure shooter: I know *Radiant Silvergun 2* is a near impossibility since Treasure has yet to do a sequel, but it'd be nice to see them flex some DC muscle in another shooter.
8. Ramparts: READY... FIRE!!! 'Nuff said.
9. Metal Gear: another Hideo Kojima masterpiece... it's been rumored for DC, but tell me it's more than rumor.
10. Pirates: Sid [Meier], give it to us! El Niño and I can't be the only ones screaming for a 128-bit upgrade of this pirate-sim classic.

I'm assuming that *Daytona 2* is coming out, though it hasn't been announced yet. Can't wait for 8 player racing with drivers from Japan and around the world.



EL NIÑO

1. Shadowrun: One of the best RPGs to ever come out, both the SNES and Genesis versions were brilliant and very exciting.
2. Pirates!: It's a game with pirates! Microprose never made a better game (and that's coming from a psycho Civ fan).
3. a Cthulu RPG: The second greatest mythos ever (behind AD&D) and no one bothers to tap into it. H.P. Lovecraft drove himself crazy creating this mad universe, why not share it with the gaming world?
4. A surfing title: *North Shore* the game, baby. Buy a used board, enter tourneys and join the circuit. Travel to exotic locations and wow the crowd with gnarly tricks and tube action.
5. Ramparts: Do I even need to go into this? Just bring it out.
6. A NICHE SPORTS GAME!!!!: Lacrosse, rugby, World's Strongest Man, whatever. Let's go EA, take a chance, we know you've got the cash.
7. Heavy Barrel: My favorite shooter of all time. I wanna hear those words when you assemble the gun... "HEAVY BARREL!"
8. Monster Rancher: I fell in love with this game. Give it some more depth and a wider variety of creatures, and I'll be in heaven.
9. Star Wars Megamix: You've got all of the Trilogy characters and the Phantom Menace. But if you plan on making it as shoddy as *Teras Kasi*, then just forget it.
10. Super Black Bass — Turbo: Don't laugh. With hardware like the Dreamcast, a fishing title could rock. Throw in some shark fishing, too.

With the American launch of the Dreamcast on the horizon, comes the rekindling of dreams of the types of games I'd like to see; games that I have wished would grace such systems as N64 and PlayStation as both consoles begin to go stale.

When ECM told me to come up with ten titles that I want to see, I was like 'Only ten?' Hell, I can think of twenty – although I'd settle for five... or even just one [note to developers: just come close and you're gettin' some serious coverage].

FURY

1. Strider: I would gladly sacrifice ECM's beloved Parappa clock (and surely my job in the process) for a chance to re-live that old *Strider* magic on the Dreamcast.
2. Castlevania: How could Konami possibly go wrong with this one? *Symphony of the Night* was just the beginning!
3. NiGHTS: If there are any creative juices left in Yuji Naka after *Sonic Adventure* I'd love to play a *NiGHTS* sequel.
4. Guardian Heroes: As much as I'd kill to see *GH* make an appearance on the DC, I'd gladly take any game Treasure had in mind.
5. Metal Slug: SNK are old pros at creating some of the most gorgeous hand drawn platformers out there. *Metal Slug* on the DC... fogettaboutit!
6. Shinobi: Please SEGA bring back everybody's favorite ninja on the DC. It's been far too long since Shinobi's last appearance on the Saturn and this time, try to avoid live-action cinemas!
7. Ghouls and Ghosts: Why Capcom has neglected this classic masterpiece so far is just beyond me. And if I may be so bold, I'd also like to see it come out sometime before the next 10 or so versions of SF appear on the DC!
8. Altered Beast: The very reason I bought my Genesis, and have been waiting for a sequel ever since. (Hello Sega, you do remember this game right?).
9. Golden Axe: *Golden Axe* was one kickass game on the Genesis and Sega owes a DC version to fans who had to settle for *Golden Axe the Duel* on the Saturn.
10. Actraiser: Well, I can at least dream can't I?

It's hard for me to describe just how excited I am about the launch of the Dreamcast. I love Sega and defended the Saturn right up until the end. From the moment I first heard rumors about a new 128-bit Sega system I knew right then and there, that Sega would finally put all the critics in their place. I've played the Dreamcast, I've seen the future, now just bring out the games!

INCOMING

Developer_Rage Software plc
Publisher_imagineer





Over the past couple weeks I'd heard talk every now and then of other Dreamcast games in release, but I found it hard to get excited about anything besides a certain hyper-active hedgehog. The other day, as I began to feel that itch to give *Sonic* another go, I passed by a few editors playing a rather impresive looking DC game called *Incoming*. Apparently, *Incoming* was originally released on PC, but since I rarely go anywhere near a computer game, I hadn't seen it until now. And since *Sonic's* not going anywhere, I figured I'd give it a go.

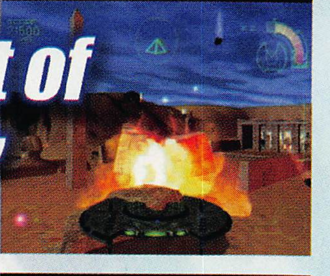


First off, *Incoming* might not be as good as *Sonic* or *VF3tb*, but right off the bat, you'll notice that this is easily among the best-looking DC games out there. The explosions are huge and as colorful as bombs bursting over the still Iraqi night (heads up, Saddam). Clean, crisp textures and a mostly solid frame rate (avoid 2P mode at all costs... welcome to slowdown death) showcase the DC's poly-pushing power.

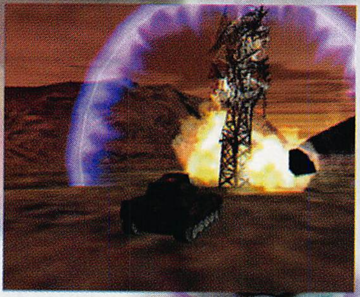
Your mission objectives are pretty straightforward: destroy anything in sight and protect your base. If cargo needs to be delivered to a particular site, then do it! And if someone gets in your way, well, take 'em out! In fact that's what's really appeals about *Incoming*, there's no shortage of stuff to blow up. Also you get to take control of a number of heavily armed vehicles including tanks, *ID4*-style UFOs, attack choppers, jet fighters, and gun turrets to help make your most destructive dreams a reality! Pacifists and cry babies can pack their bags and go running to momma, cause this definitely isn't your game!



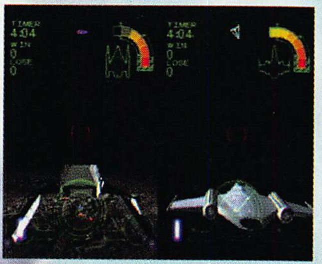
"...what's wrong with a bit of good, old mindless fun?"













The control takes a bit of getting used to, but I think the learning curve has more to do with getting used to a new pad than the game itself. After a little quality time with a DC pad you'll think you've died and gone to gaming heaven.

I've heard many editors here at *GameFan* complain that *Incoming* is a mindless game — a mere diversion till the likes of *Sega Rally 2* and *Blue Stinger* show up, but I ask you, what's wrong with a bit of good, old mindless fun?

Remember *Rampage* or more recently *Rogue Squadron*... not much point there. Do all games need to be as involved as *MGS* or *Zelda*? I'd have to say 'no.' Heck it tore me away from *Sonic Adventure* for a day or two... kicking and screaming perhaps, but ya gotta do what ya gotta do. -Fury



Welcome to the Next Level!

A hush fell across the assembled throng of GF editors, layout artists, and management personnel — the moment of truth was at hand. Sega's Dreamcast had met with an exceedingly warm reception nary a month earlier, but now was the time of the real telling; a moment that would soon be forcibly etched in the collective synapses of Team GameFan forever. It was time for the official unveiling of Yuji Naka's (hopeful) penultimate masterpiece, Sonic Adventure, to a staff of cynics (Super Teeter, El Niño, Tao), Sega stalwarts (ECM, Fury, Dangohead), and innocent bystanders (Joe D., Kid Fan, Reubus) not knowing what to fully expect.

With the flick of ECM's well-calloused [ed's note: I'll file that in the "more information than I needed to know" category] thumb, the Dreamcast sprang to life. The more fervent onlookers couldn't be sure, but they could have sworn a knowing chuckle issued from the console, as if in anticipation of what was about to transpire. The Dreamcast logo blazed forth and the room quieted such that a pin drop in the Land of the Rising Sun could be heard with Candace Bergen-like clarity; the 'licensed by Sega' screen came next and even the most jaded began to feel a bit uncomfortable, and not a little queasy; then the 'Sonic Team' logo flashed across the screen — Teeter wet himself, Jace Fury fainted, and Joe D. swallowed his 'chaw.' Brace yourself for...

Sonic Reviewed

"AGHHHHHHHHHHHH!!!!!"

—The collective sound of Team GameFan upon first viewing Sonic Adventure











From 2D Wonder to 3D Masterwork

Any number of games that made the rocky transition from the glory days of 2D to the dim nights of 3D got a bit, uh, lost (*Castlevania* on N64, *Contra*, *Samurai Showdown*, *Bubsy* <ack>... I could go on for days). In fact, in many cases there's an inverse relationship between how good a game was in 2D and how bad it became in 3D (if *Blasto* had been 2D, you can bet it would have been incredible, eh?).

And I could wrap up this review very quickly, and succinctly, by saying this: *Sonic Adventure* is the ultimate transition from 2D to 3D—no game yet released on any platform has been as close to its roots. Not *Mario*, not *Castlevania*, not *Metal Gear*, not *Zelda*—nothing. Basically, those that were enraptured with the 16-bit versions of *Sonic* will not—nay, cannot—be disappointed with this title. That having been said, I am anything but succinct.

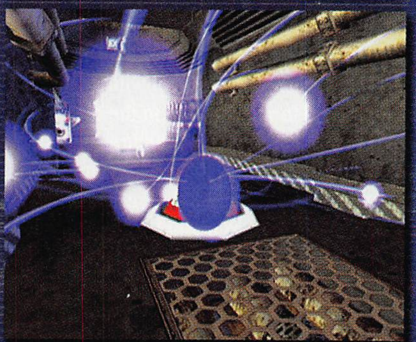


Sonic Adventure is simply the most stunning spectacle ever seen in the medium of "interactive entertainment" (buzz words annoy me). Graphically, it has no peers (see "Blast Processing3"); play-wise it's deeper than EA's marketing budget; and aurally it puts 95% of 'game music' to shame. Nearly nothing was left to chance, and Sonic Team has indeed crafted a masterpiece to rival even the mightiest; *Zelda* included.

Controlling Sonic and co. is nearly flawless. Whether it's Sonic tearing, Concord-like, across vast stretches of Mobius; Knuckles scaling the sheer face of Red Mountain; Amy bringing a little cuteness to the equation; Big kicking back and bagging some fish on the Emerald Coast; E-102 fighting for



















his 'soul' on Eggman's Egg Carrier; Tails piloting the Tornado Mark 2 to victory; or the utterly unbelievable final battle between Super Sonic and Ultimate Chaos (absolutely speechless), the control is finely tuned and honed to perfection. If you're a *Sonic* fan, it doesn't get any better than this (and judging by *Sonic*'s success in the past, there are a lot of you). Those that aren't... well, you will be.

And sure, I could get mired in the negative aspects of *SA* (see the "Rushed" section for details) but why do so many people get caught up dwelling on the negative, when the positives so far outweigh the negatives (kinda like GameFan, uh, ouch). So for those that are among Club Jaded, you can close the mag now, go back to your dark little hole, pull the rock over it, and live in your dank, dreary little world where the only good games are games that nobody else likes.

Blast Processing

Some graphical problems aside (skip ahead to the "Rushed" section), you have never, not in your wildest flights of fancy, ever seen anything like this. Games like *Turok 2* on N64, *One* on PS, and even *Unreal* for 3D-accelerated PC's (dual Voodoos included) can't hold a candle to the sheer visual assault that *Sonic*, running under the unholy force that is Power VR2, represents. In fact, the only game that even begins to approach it is *Daytona 2* running on Model 3, Step 2 hardware, and even that can't compete head-on with Dreamcast in the area of texture clarity (Last Minute ECM's Note: early playtests of *House of the Dead 2* place the graphics at least on par with *Sonic*... running on DC-powered hardware, of course).





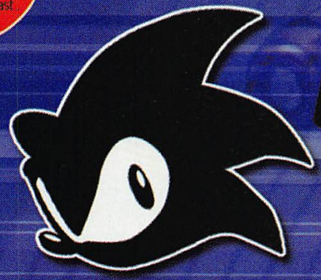
Sonic has made a virtually flawless leap into the 3rd dimension. Huge, expansive 3D worlds that successfully convey the size and scope of the levels found in the pinnacle of 2D *Sonics*: *Sonic 3* and *Sonic & Knuckles*. Whether it's the wind-swept, tornado-torn byways of the Windy Valley, or the rocky, blustery outcrops of the Red Mountain, you'll be shocked at what Sonic Team has managed to accomplish on 'we're not even complete, how did you manage this' dev. kits. Call it 'super skills,' 'super powers,' or 'they sold their souls to the dark lord.' Whatever the case, this is the next level.

The texture quality in *SA* is such that in some spots the effect is nearly photo-realistic. For example, the wooden steps at the entrance to the Mystic Ruins look so, uh, real, you can practically reach out and touch them... just watch out for splinters! The more organic levels feature such a degree of lush vibrancy that you can practically feel the dew on your skin, and a light breeze raising goose bumps on your bare flesh — many probably wouldn't mind sitting down for a spell, admiring the glorious scenery, and taking a nice nap. Fury was even thinking about building a small house in the Mystic Ruins.

Beyond the nigh-unbelievable, Model 3-crushing, texture quality, the Power VR hardware is called in to flex its muscle on smoke and fire effects (that actually look like smoke and fire, not a single poly with a fire/smoke T-map applied); wicked, multi-layer 'hold the mesh' transparencies; accurate lighting (though quite a bit of it appears to be pre-rendered); and frame rates from a solid 30 to up and beyond 60 — smoother than the curves on a So. Cal beach bunny, post-surgery... yes, game mag editors like girls (well, GF eds do... I wouldn't dream of speaking for the rest).

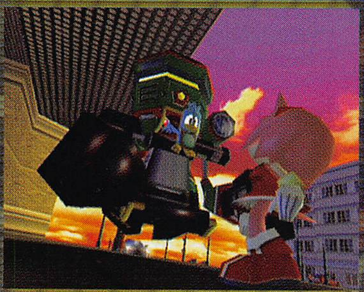
And what would a *Sonic* game be without white-knuckled, eye-flaying, pantaloon-soiling, Michael Johnson-scorching (toast, anyone?) speed! When Sonic is in full 'flight,' it's quite apparent that you've entered a new realm of gaming. As well, there's always the nagging feeling that if you don't slow down and let Sonic 'rest' once in a while, the windows in your house might erupt from the sound-barrier shattering velocities.

And lest I forget, a poly-count that dwarfs even the alarming number of 'unplanned pregnancies' during the NBA's extended down-time this season (then again, even the DC would be hard-pressed keeping up with that).



Positives over Negatives

"..." —The collective sound of Team GameFan, five minutes into Sonic Adventure.



Don't call it "rushed," call it "giving them what they want"... now.



Many of you may have heard by now that *Sonic Adventure* does not run at a constant 60 FPS, nor is there a total absence of pop-up, and even that there are some z-buffering problems. Well, it's all true. Yep, I'm not even going to try and candy-coat this, what with some ugly pop-up, annoying frame drops, and some 'are they there or are they not' polys which are all completely the result of a rush job in the final stages of development (some stages are awe-inspiring, while others feel a bit under-cooked... beta, even). That being said, who cares?! Sure, some of the Sega-haters out there will use these issues as a way to vilify the DC/Sega and further their "just wait for PS2" arguments (which also happen to be the same people that think *Zelda* "isn't that good" — coincidence? I think not), but most of you will know a good thing when you see it. Here's a bit more detail:





• Control and camera issues (they're pretty much inter-related): Yep, the camera can get into some ugly situations sometimes: showing the opposite sides of walls you shouldn't be able to see and pulling back too far from the action and/or lagging to keep up with it. On occasion these issues can lead to a premature death as it's simply impossible to see where you're headed before running into an enemy or stepping, Wile E. Coyote-like, off a cliff.



• Frame rate: As stated above, no, the game does not run at a constant 60 FPS despite what you may have heard elsewhere. However, does it really matter that much? For the most part the game moves so quickly that you'll be too busy trying to avoid whiplash to notice some slowdown and frame drop here and there (OK, so you'll notice it, but it won't bother you that much — trust me).







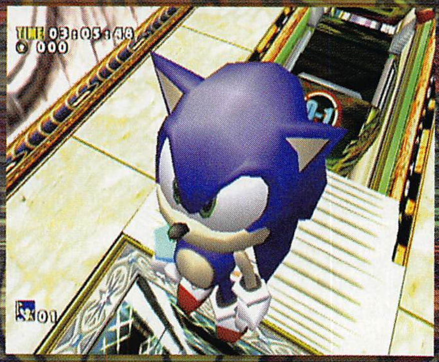


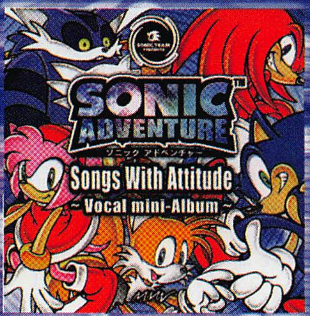
• Pop-up: <sigh> Yes, it's there. I know, I know, we're all tired of it and we expected it to be remedied by the time the "128-bit" machines rolled around, but continent building is alive and well, much to everyone's pain. This is not something that's likely to be rectified prior to a US release due to the fact that it does not affect gameplay at all (but still... if only it would go away, <grumble>).

• Some problems with lip-syncing on the spoken parts, where the words don't match up with the facial animation (now our Japanese compatriots know how we feel after watching way too many dubbed *Godzilla* flicks).

• The ever-so-popular "Z-buffer of doom" rears its ugly head quite a bit in *SA*. Sometimes, as one of the characters is cruising along, he or she will simply run right through a poly and out into empty space (be careful on some of the snowboarding portions... it's a long way down). Seems that maybe the fellas at Sonic Team had some trouble coming to grips with the Power VR's wacky "hidden surface removal" method of z-buffering.

Any and all of the problems that directly affect gameplay (z-buffering, camera issues, etc.) will definitely be repaired prior to US launch. The aesthetic issues (pop-up, frame rate, etc.) are of a much lower priority to Sega at this point (but let's hope they find it in their hearts to fix 'em anyway!).





Sonic Boom!



If you were one of the few, the proud that actually owned the import *Sonic CD*, you may recall the simply stunning musical score. Sure, the U.S. rev had the unforgettable "Sonic Boom," but as for the rest of the music, it was import all the way. Well, I don't know how to say this, but this is the first game for which I have ever bought the music CD. What caused this sudden change of heart (generally speaking, game music and me get along as well as El Niño and those nasty chupacabras)? It's probably the fact that the album contains songs that would fit like a fresh pair of parachute pants in the 'cheese metal' era of the mid-'80s. Now I don't know about you, but I'm a freak for just about any music from the decade of decades (yeah, yeah, call me crazy if you must). Some of the tracks seem like they were ripped right out of Sammy Hagar's music catalogue ("I Can't Drive 55," "Heavy Metal," et al) and I couldn't be happier for it! The initial music CD (there'll be more, trust me) contains themes for each of the characters in *Sonic Adventure* and range from head-bangin' heaven ("Open Your Heart" and "It Doesn't Matter") to the painful, agonizing hip-hop-athon of Knuckles ("Unknown From M.E.").

Sweet Dreams

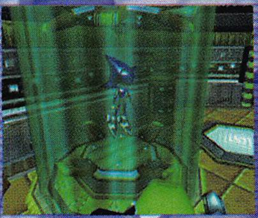






Sonic Adventure tips its hat to the unearthly work of art that is *NiGHTS* with its own pinball game (starring Sonic as the 'ball') in the Casinopolis level! The first time the staff at GF saw it, we all let out a collective "AGHH-HHHHH!!!" and went into paroxysms of joy! While it's a cool little pinball game, it doesn't get really interesting until you journey deeper into the machine and take a flight through the Spring Valley level from the Saturn game with NiGHTS himself levitating above the Ideya Palace!!! Can a DC rev of *NiGHTS* be far behind?

Calling Heavy Metal





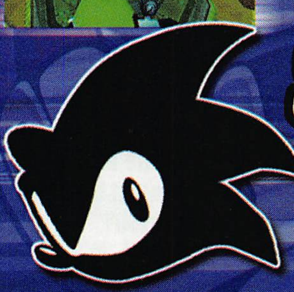
Metal Sonic and Mecha Sonic return from *Sonic 2* and *Sonic CD* respectively! These two heavy metal horrors return briefly as museum pieces in Robotnik/Eggman's lair. I'm sure Amy is none too happy to see Mecha Sonic... Alas, you don't get to fight either (imagine being able to play one!) though it's nice to see that Sonic Team hasn't let them continue to rust on the video game scrap heap.

Planes, Trains and... Snowboards?!





This time out, Sonic and crew get the honor of cruising over, under, and above the numerous worlds in SA by pláne, train, and yes, snowboard (even a sandboard in parts). Whether it's Sonic and Tails tearing through the sky like a dark angel of death in the Tornado Mark 2 (Mark 1 being Tails' plane in Sonic 2 and 3). The whole crew gets to ride the Mystic Ruin Express and Big gets to ride the elusive Egg Carrier Monorail. But the icing on the cake goes to the absolutely amazing, 'it looks so good I could get frost bite' snowboarding levels in the Ice Cap Zone. Arcade games like *Alpine Racer*, *Alpine Boarder*, and *Sega Ski Super G* can't hold a candle to the blistering speeds and blazing textures as Sonic and Tails rip down the slopes, all while Jack Frost (in the form of a rampaging avalanche) nips at their heels.



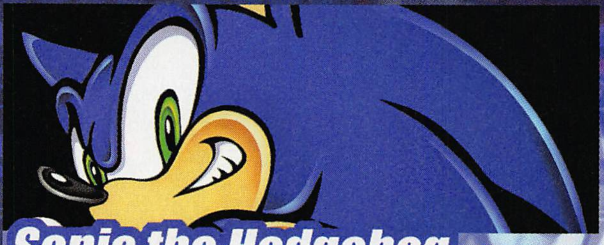
Sonic Extras!

"Get him some smelling salts!"

—ECM, after Jace Fury fainted at the site of the 'Sonic Team' logo.



TEAM SONIC!





99
G: 10
C: 9
P: 10
M: 10
O: 10



Sonic the Hedgehog

Best Level: Emerald Coast and Speed Highway

"I'll never look back,
I've got no regrets
Cause time doesn't
wait for me
I choose to go my
own way"

The star of the show, is (not surprisingly) also the single best adventure in the game. Blistering, scorching, chafing (running low on hyperbole) velocities are at Sonic's command. Whether it's the blazing, 'how many polys are they using on that killer whale?!' sequence in the Emerald Coast (say 'hi' to Ecco for me), or racing down the side of a building at unfathomable, rivet-rending velocities in Speed Highway, Sonic is back! Let's just hope it doesn't take another 4 years or so for another real Sonic adventure...



80
G: 10
C: 8
P: 7
M: 8
O: 9

Amy Rose

Best Level: Hot Shelter

In a word: Flickies! That aside, Amy features the least impressive quest overall, and seems to be a bit too much like filler material more than a really well thought out set of goals (unlike the other characters). That being said, Amy is still a better gymnast than Mario (with all of her leaps and tumbles with the 'mallet jump'), although you may want to bring along the insulin — Amy is about ten times as cute and sweet as anything you've ever seen (I went into sugar-shock about five times over the course of her adventure, <ugh>).



"You can be my sweetest
honey for all of eternity"





Knuckles the Echidna

Best Level: Red Mountain

98
G: 10
C: 9
P: 10
M: 9
O: 10

"Born on an island in
the heavens
The blood of my ances-
tors flows inside me
My duty is to guard the
Master Emerald"

Combining all of the best characteristics of Sonic (speed), Tails (flying), and his own little somethin', somethin' (climbing), Knuckles' quest (as with the older Sonic games) is one of the more fun romps through Sonic Adventure. Alas, with these gifts the inevitable result is that the game is over almost before it starts. Knuckles is for those that have a more difficult time with the other characters (is it possible that any of the quests can be termed "difficult"?)—save him for last!





e-102 "γ"

Best Level: Red Mountain

95
G: 10
C: 9
P: 10
M: 9
O: 10

E-102 features the darkest quest of the four, with murder, betrayal, and soul-searching (yep, you read that right) all playing a big part in the drama. Featuring Panzer Dragoon-style 'lock-on' missiles and plenty of Hedgehog huntin' early on, E-102's quest follows a decidedly more foreboding path than the others. Wrestling with issues over ethics from the moment Eggman punishes his compatriots to the point where he 'sees the light.' The lock-on, run-and-gun action is a nice change of pace from the more benign methods Sonic and Co. employ in their thirst for vengeance.

"With a steel heart
inside a steel body
I'm a high-tech assault
machine
Watch our for the laser
rifle on my right arm!"



95
G: 10
C: 9
P: 10
M: 9
O: 10



Best Level: Ice Cap

Big the Cat

Big's claim to fame is his handy fishin' pole and tricky little frog buddy that gets him into all sorts of misadventures. While the other characters seem to have a dark foreboding undercurrent running through their stories at one point or another (especially E-102 and Super Sonic), Big is pure whimsical fun. Journey with him as he visits numerous fishing holes throughout the levels, all the while trying to rescue his amphibious pal. Solid fun, but not one you'll probably come back to very often (though this is a good indication of what to expect from DC Get Bass!).



"Keep striving for a new
tomorrow
I've got nothing to worry me
Come on let's just get up and
go, go, go!"





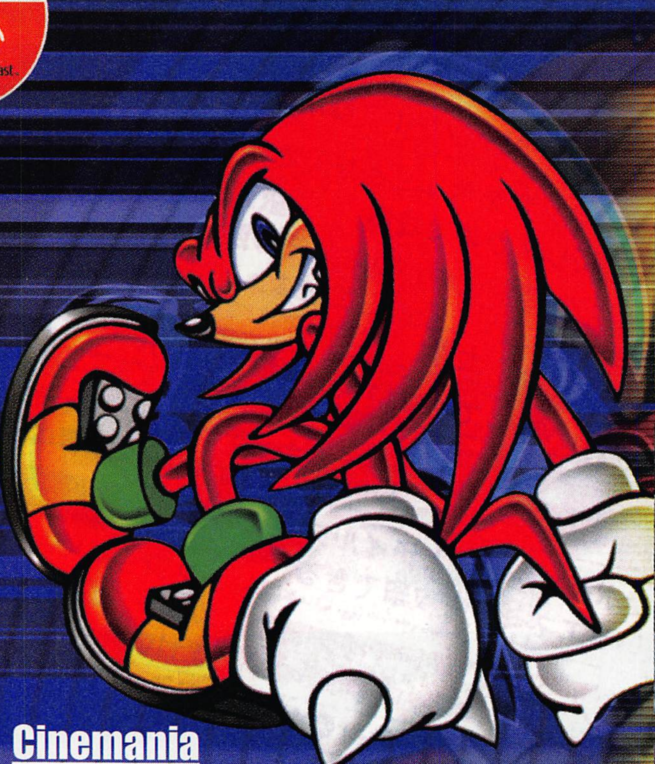
Best Level: Sand Hill

Miles "Tails" Prower

Sonic's number two, Tails gets to cruise around in the Tornado Mark 2 assault fighter (powered by new-fangled Chaos emerald technology) and fly through the levels all the while racing Sonic for the white checkered flag across a number of Sonic's levels. However, Tails really gets to strut his stuff in the Panzer Dragoon-inspired Sand Hill Zone. Ripping his board across the dunes, all the while dodging a giant sand worm is an experience almost beyond words — don't let it be beyond your wallet!

"I wanna fly high so I
can reach the highest
of all the heavens
Somebody will be wait-
ing for me, so I have
gotta fly higher"

96
G: 10
C: 9
P: 9
M: 9
O: 10















Cinemania

While everybody bemoaned the sad state of rendered sequences on Saturn (Cinepak is dead! Hip-hip-hooray!), there'll be no such complaints leveled at Dreamcast. While the PS was the king of video compression in the 32-bit era (console or PC), it's quite clear that the DC is leading the charge into the next millenium with crystal-clear, tile-free video sequences that even the most hard-core CG-lover (Eggo, for instance) had to admit were virtually indistinguishable from the MPEG-2 routines of DVD (better even than *VF3tb* which was out barely a month earlier). Sofdec's MPEG software is clearly amazing, and the video











Super Sonic on Dreamcast!!

For more info see Hocus...

Developer - Sonic Team **Publisher - Sega Enterprises, LTD.**
Format - GD ROM **# OF PLAYERS - 1** **AVAILABLE - NOW JAPAN**











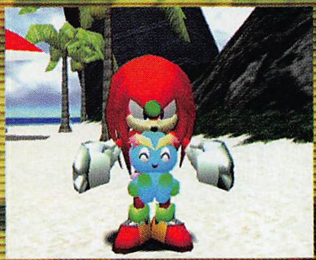
quality only stands to improve with the introduction of Duck Corp.'s TruMotion compression.

Beyond the stunning CG intermissions sprinkled throughout the game, *SA* is stocked with cinema after real-time cinema. Each sequence featuring full voice and blazing, in-game graphics (something many people are especially keen on after *Metal Gear Solid*). At the rate Dreamcast technology is moving, there won't be a need for anything but real-time cinemas in the near future.



Fin

When it comes right down to it, beyond the stunning graphics, the nearly flawless gameplay, and the absolutely astounding score, the single most amazing item about *Sonic Adventure* is the simple fact that it's a first-generation game. Even more frightening is the fact that it simply obliterates *VF3tb*, which was barely a month old at the time of *Sonic*'s release. In fact, it's such a leap in so short a span of time, that Sega has officially put Sony and Nintendo on notice — the kid gloves are off! Believe it or not, one Sega PR person has stated that, "*Sonic* is OK, but wait till you see the big guns at E3!"... <shudder>, can you even begin to imagine...?







And on a parting note, I leave you with this:

"Want to see something really special? Run out and pick up a copy of *Sonic the Hedgehog*, and plug it into your Genesis. Now turn it on, and that thing you used to call a TV set becomes a window to a different world — a land of color and sound, of action and adventure, of terrible danger and glorious reward."

—Chris Bieniek, Video Games & Computer Entertainment, June 1991

Simply substitute the words "*Sonic the Hedgehog*" with "*Sonic Adventure*" and "Genesis" with "Dreamcast" and you simply don't have a better way of describing this game (and in a way I could never so succinctly put it).
Thank you, Mr. Bieniek.

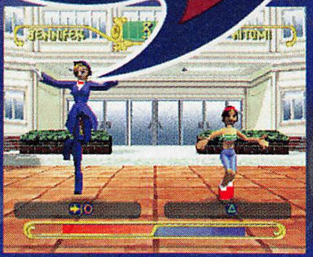
ECM










The incredible success of *Beatmania* in Japan has had an unfortunate side-effect, namely... *Dance! Dance! Dance!* — Konami's latest people-can't-get-enough-of-dance-games-so-let's-give-em-this-offering. *Parappa* was new, *Bust-A-Move* was the pinnacle, *Beatmania* was amusing... and *Dance! Dance! Dance!* is just the 'beat game' cellar dweller.

So what's wrong with *DDD*? It tries to be like Enix's *Bust-A-Move*, a one-on-one danceoff game of button presses and pad movements on every fourth beat. Unfortunately, the visuals in this game aren't on par with *BaM*. The frame rate is a mere 30 fps (*BaM* was 60), the characters are smaller, and they're not even motion captured.

The character design is varied but uninteresting. Maybe you'll be tempted by the likes of a Russian Cossack dancer, Flamenco, Jazz (that Jazz Dancer dances more like ballet), or Tap Dancer... but not I. Rockabilly (which is coming back) and Samba are cool, but the lack of motion capture means most of the character's dancing makes you wince (though the Samba is quite sizzling!).

Another of the game's faults is the music, if you can call it that. The 'songs' are more like mindless beats with no lyrics. I didn't like Konami's musical selection in *Beatmania* (e.g., "Neko Neko Oww"), and *Dance! Dance! Dance!*'s tunes are even worse.

There is the expected Vs mode, a freestyle dancing mode, and even a story mode. But none of these are enough to lift *DDD* above the status of mediocre at best.

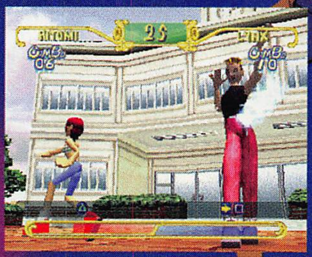
The game's lone saving grace is the ability to play your own music. Think about it, a 'beat game' that lets you dance to your favorite music? It'll sell millions! ...Well, not when the game plays like *DDD*.



While the game recognizes a primitive beat and adjusts according to the tempo of the custom CD you stick in, the "game's beat" (which you have to keep in your head) isn't the same as the "true beat of the music." So what ends up happening is — you're trying to concentrate on an imaginary beat while familiar songs serve as background music which you end up tuning out (what a shame!). Guess you can chalk this one up to the old "good idea but poor execution" category.

While *DDD* does little right, games like this are necessary to curtail a future explosion of poor rhythm games. "Build it and they will come?" ...not this time. *E*





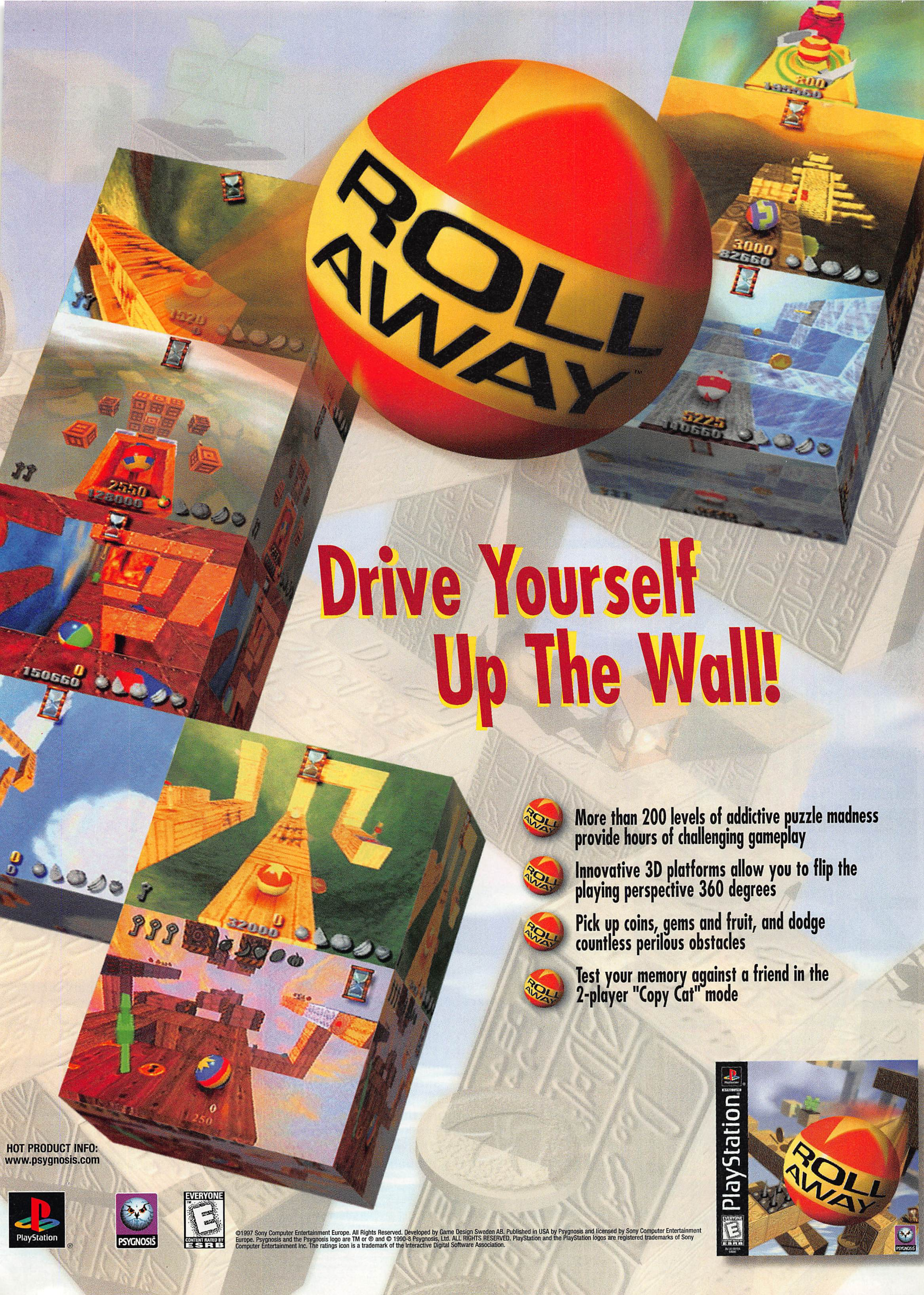
REVIEW

PlayStation

DEVELOPER - KONAMI	# OF PLAYERS - 1-2
PUBLISHER - KONAMI	DIFFICULTY - MODERATE
FORMAT - CD	AVAILABLE - NOW JAPAN



EGGO
"Tap Dancing to Rob Zombie?!?"



ROLL AWAY
Drive Yourself Up The Wall!
More than 200 levels of addictive puzzle madness provide hours of challenging gameplay
Innovative 3D platforms allow you to flip the playing perspective 360 degrees
Pick up coins, gems and fruit, and dodge countless perilous obstacles
Test your memory against a friend in the 2-player "Copy Cat" mode
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STREET FIGHTER ZERO3

Take Heed, This Is No Ordinary Street Fighter

Let me fill you in on my background... I've lived *Street Fighter* for the past 8 years. Ever since the game's infancy, I was there... watching it evolve through 10 games as part of the tournament scene; and I can proudly say I'm a grizzled Street Fighter veteran, having played *Street Fighter II-III.* In all those years of Yoga Firing, I saw interest in the series drop off over time. Most of the retirees cited the same problem — "Lack of innovation and too much of the same. Add a few new moves and characters, broaden the color palette of the Shotokans, and you've got yourself a new *Street Fighter*? Bleech!"

Well, unlike the *Threes*, *Street Fighter Zero 3* has seen a resurgence of interest from the *Street Fighter* community. Cover your ears folks, it's hideous cliché time. *SFA3* has something to offer gamers of all kinds: whether you're a *SF* zealot, a veteran of the "Hyperfighting Wars," a rookie who can barely throw a Fireball on a pad, a jaded 2D gamer who doesn't play fighting games, or a Marvelous air-comboing high-flyer... *Zero3* will either be loved or at **least** respected as the best fighting game on the PlayStation.





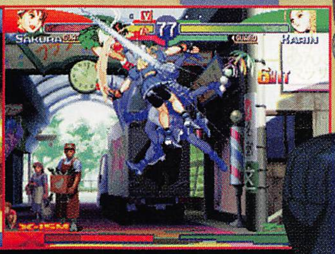
The High-Water Mark For Console Fighters

But wait, *Zero3* isn't content with just the crown of best PlayStation fighting game. Stifling the bloody roars of the likes of *Tobal 2* and *Tekken 3* or a rival school of gaming, younger brother *Alpha 2*, the behemoth-like *SFA3* crushes **all** the 32-bit *VS.* competition under its guilty gears. Compare it with the N64's *Mortal Kombat 4* and it's just a Fatality! Only one fighter left...

I know I'll get heat for this, but *SFA3* on the PlayStation is a better fighting game than *VF3tb* on Dreamcast. Make no mistake, I like *Virtua Fighter* probably more than the average gamer in U.S. (we don't worship it here like they do in Japan); and I played *VF2* a lot and had a respectable Kage and Giant Swinging (Yoga Flaaaaame) Wolf. And to its credit, *VF3tb* is a 3D masterpiece, but *SFA3* is just as amazing when you see it running in all its 2D glory on a PlayStation without the crutch of a 4 meg RAM pak. And stick me on a desert island with only one fighting game to play forever and I'll pick *Street Fighter* over *Virtua Fighter* any day. With that said, console fighters don't get any better than *Zero 3*.








More Features Than Waka Can Count

So where do I begin? Well, there's simplified alpha counters, throwing level three supers with the press of one button, rolling for gimps, Pocket Station support, Training mode, Dual Shock compatible, World Tour mode, and a guard meter. But I'll get into all that later.

Let's start with the -isms. What *Alpha3* brings to the table, which no other *SF* had before are the four choices of what to do with your super bar. Fans of *Alpha 2* will be split between the Z-ism (traditional three supers, air blocking, and alpha counters all at your disposal) and the V-ism (complete loss of supers for a very lengthy custom combo meter and a new move for some characters). Old school players can opt to play *SF Super*-like characters by choosing X-ism (loss of air blocking/alpha counters in exchange for one very strong super and more damaging normal moves). Finally, the ancient *SF*ers have the ability to play no-isms, which throws supers, alpha counters, and custom combos out the window; fortunately, the guard meter is removed as well in this mode.

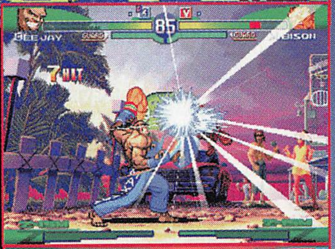
Turtles — The New Endangered Species



Did somebody say guard meter? That's right, *Alpha 3*'s controversial addition to the *Street Fighter* universe is a meter which holds your 'guard juice.' Block too much and this meter empties... when it does, your character freezes and becomes vulnerable for a second (a window of opportunity for a ready combo/super). After that, the guard meter refills fully, but is shortened in length for the rest of the round, and it will continue to shrink the more your guard is broken. Every round, the meter returns to normal, with some characters having longer meters than others. It's just one more factor to consider when trying to run out the clock. And in case you're wondering, the meter does replenish on its own over time, just very slowly.

Many people have labeled this guard meter and 'not being able to block' cheap. I'm not a big fan of it myself, but players have grown to adapt to it, just like they adjusted to the custom combo when that first came out. Watch pros go at it in *Alpha 3* and you'll see them whittle down that guard meter. Then, when it's sufficiently low, they'll perform a lengthy super combo (with the ability to block being lost somewhere in between).

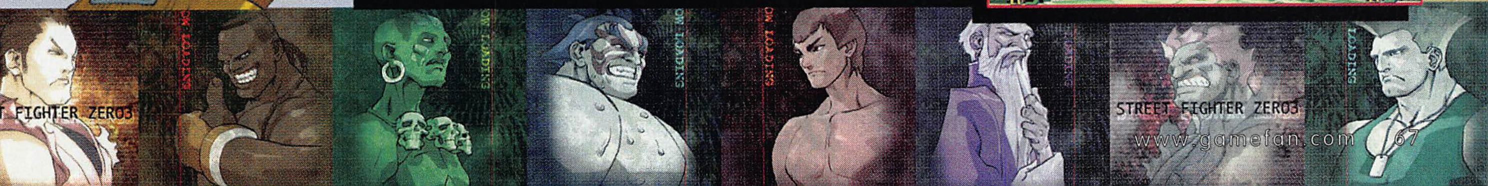
This whole idea of a guard meter is a result of the rants that *Street Fighter* is a "turtling" game in which a player can get the lead and block till time runs out. I never found this criticism to be legit, assuming you knew how to throw, and counter throws. But alas, Capcom listened to the "turtle" war cries, and now we have a meter which decides when we can block and when we can't. For what it's worth, the addition of the guard meter has resulted in faster paced, Ken-style, go-for-broke matches. The ferocity and action have picked up, making for some edge-of-your-armchair excitement.





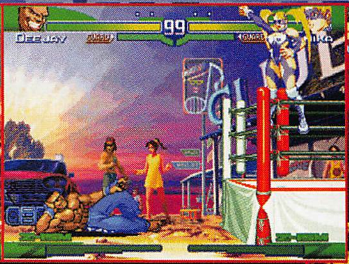




STREET FIGHTER ZERO3









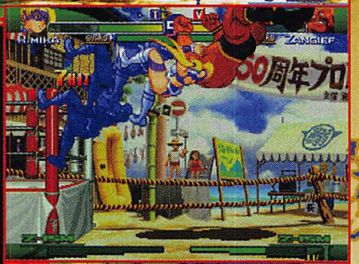
Welcome Back, 2D! I Thought You Were Dead.

I hate to climb up on the soapbox and beat my chest about the lost glory that is 2D graphics, but I feel I have to. *Street Fighter Alpha 3* is another reason to remember what was so great about 2D — multiple levels of parallax, line scrolling, an incredible mix of vibrant colors (compare that to the "brown and grey" 3rd person corridor games out now), that hand-drawn feel, and that super-fine level of hand-crafted detail which only Capcom backgrounds can provide. Things like this, once taken for granted, are becoming so few and far between in today's world of polys, texture maps, and prerendered backgrounds. So drink... while you still can 2D gamers. Drink and quench that thirst for color!

And while *Alpha 3's* backgrounds aren't bursting at the seams with life (like those in the original *Street Fighter II*), consider the staggering number of backgrounds in the game, and you'll be impressed. To some degree, they all exhibit the characteristics described above, which will leave jaded gamers in tears, yearning for games of old. Parallax! Parallax! My kingdom for more parallax!

But *Alpha 3* isn't just about backgrounds, the characters themselves all measure up to Capcom's high standards, with new frames of animation doled out to everyone. Between rounds, the character "Vs." portraits are phenomenal. No other company has been able to compete with Capcom's flair for hand-drawn character art, and when you see the visuals in *SFA3*, you'll know why. Best of all, *Alpha 3* is anchored in solid gameplay... it's not just a flashy piece of eye candy, to be devoured in seconds, only to leave you wanting more.

Between *Alpha 3* and *Heart of Darkness*, you're looking at the most beautiful games on the PlayStation. Cherish it while you can, jaded gamers, we may not be treated to a visual feast like this for quite some time...





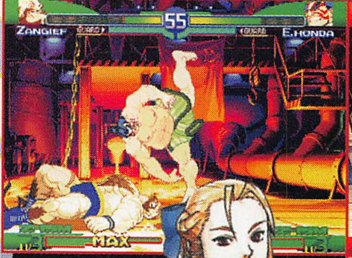


What's Not To Like

No brilliant game comes without flaws, and *Alpha 3* is no exception. Lost animation is the classic problem which has plagued previous Capcom fighting game ports on the PlayStation. Just mention the whole "*Vs.*" series on the PlayStation, and you'll elicit a look of disgust. "Choppy, framey death" is the phrase ECM uses to describe those games, which were so lacking in the animation department that it hindered any thoughts of smooth gameplay. Saturn ports were always better, thanks to the additional memory from the 4 meg RAM pak.

Then along comes *Alpha 3*, fresh on the heels of some poor PlayStation ports. The track record wasn't good, but *SFA3* turns things around right away. I'm at a loss for words, because *Alpha 3* is not choppy at all. Sure, there **are** frames missing in the home version, but the game moves so smoothly (without slowdown) that gameplay is unaffected... no chugging along or framey death here. Why, oh why did the *Vs.* games turn out the way they did when Capcom was capable of this all along?

The other problem is another regular for Capcom fighters — balance. When you pack a game with 30 characters and four variants of each, it's very difficult to make a game where one character doesn't dominate the rest. *SFII* was ruled by Guile and Dhalsim; *Champion* was the home of Guile and Bison; *Super* was Sagat's lair; *Alpha* debuted Guy's chain combos; and in *Alpha 2*... custom combos ruled. In *Alpha 3*, the scepter of power is handed over to Dhalsim, who is way too powerful compared to the others.











The Pride Of Capcom's Fighting Game Stable

So there you have it, there will be a U.S. version of Zero 3, but don't expect to see it till later in the year. Capcom may also still make changes (other than localization of the text), but I doubt they'll want to tamper too much with this one. Left untouched, this is the final form of a game which has taken eight years to evolve... and it's simply amazing.





Tour The World! Visit Brazil! See The Wonders Of Rome!







R REVIEW

PlayStation

- DEVELOPER - CAPCOM
- PUBLISHER - CAPCOM
- FORMAT - CD
- # OF PLAYERS - 1-2
- DIFFICULTY - ADJ.
- AVAILABLE - NOW JAPAN

Instead of opting to just port over the arcade version of *Alpha 3*, Capcom has added something special to the home version — Pocket Station support and World Tour mode. The Pocket Station is Sony's take on Sega's VMS — the memory card that does more than save. A portable, Tamagotchi-like memory card with an LCD display, the Pocket Station lets you play mini-games and link up to other Pocket Stations. *Alpha 3* lets you train and trade personalized characters on the Pocket Station with other PS owners.

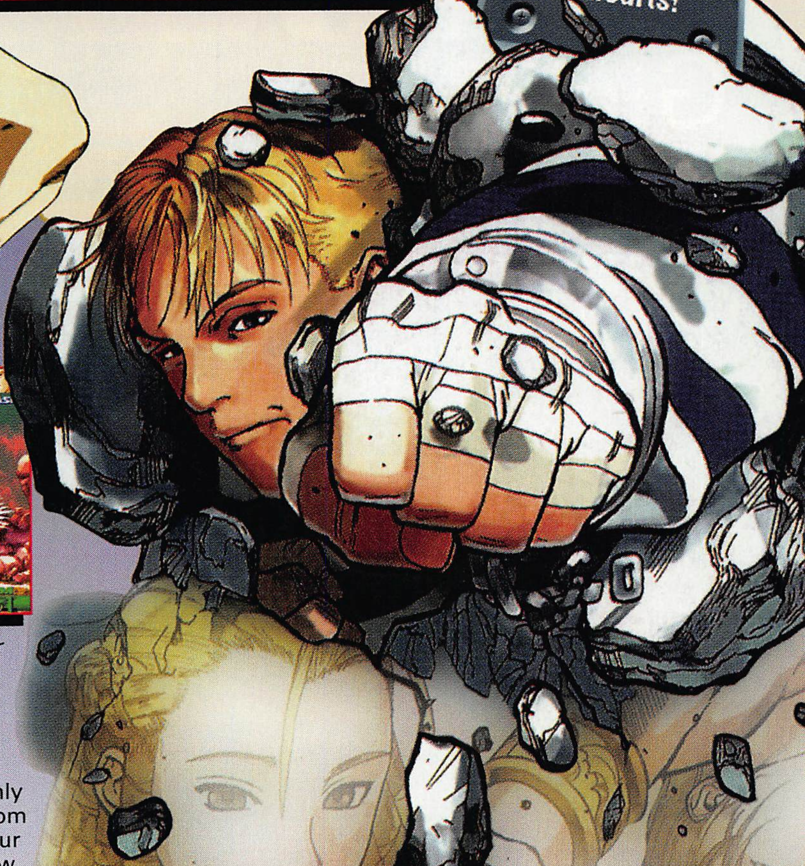
World Tour mode is a feature unique to the home version of *Alpha 3*, in which you visit different locales around the world, picking your fights like Ryu the wandering traveller. The points you score during the round earn you experience, and your character gains levels like an RPG. As you level up, you'll gain special features such as: the Gauge Plus (which fills your super bar naturally over time), the Zero Combo (lets your character perform chain combos), or the Super Zero Cancel (cancel a special move into a super). But you can't cram all these extra abilities into one huge, overpowering monstrosity. Instead, you'll have to pick 2-3 of the abilities and customize your character.

Best of all, you can take your personalized character from World Tour mode and enter it into the regular Vs. mode. So, if you and your friends go nuts on World Tour mode, you'll be fighting with super-human characters in your Vs. mode marathons.



EGGO
Damn... Look at those hearts!





Tag Team, Back Again-



This feature, which debuted in the original *Street Fighter Alpha*, has been tremendously popular because it allows for cooperative Street Fighting and combos galore. Team up with a friend to pummel a common enemy with a display of never-before-seen combos which both of you dish out on-screen at the same time.

In *Alpha 3*, Dramatic Battle isn't just a 'trick feature' which only lets you pit Ryu and Ken vs. Bison. Now, you can choose from any two combatants to fight with... the only drawback being your opponent will be a mirror of one of you. Still, you're now allowed the freedom to mix and match dynamic duos to no end — Rose reflecting projectiles while Zangief advances?



GOD BLESS THE RING



エアガイツ EHRGEIZ





Give me 2D or give me death — this was the mantra I held so dearly regarding my beloved video games! I would not, at any cost, succumb to the horrors of 3D... I would find somehow, some way, to keep the glory of the two dimensional game alive! Yes, fellow game fans, this was my quest and... surprise, surprise, I failed miserably! Oh well, if you can't beat 'em, join 'em... and so I did. That's right folks, you might not respect me (god knows none of the editors here do!), but there were just too many games going the route of 3D to be ignored. So what would become of the three dimensional fighter? Could such a game ever possibly compete with the likes of *SF*, the very benchmark of quality 2D fighting? The answer depends solely on who's programming it. For instance, if it's a Capcom game (whether it's 2D or 3D) you can pretty much bet it's gonna be good. And if it's a Kronos game, well it's gonna be bad.

So what of *Ehrgeiz*, Square's most recent entry into the ranks of the 3D brawler? In a word, I'd probably begin by saying this is one ambitious fighter! Ambitious because *Ehrgeiz* allows fighters complete range of movement throughout each stage. This game is true 3D folks, not some pseudo 3D fighter where the action is set on a 2D foreground. Also you can interact with each stage by climbing, or rather jumping, on top of walls and onto the roofs of adjacent structures.



It's quite obvious by now that Square possesses super skills in the intro department and *Ehrgeiz* is definitely no exception! That is why I was a bit disappointed by the lack of effort expended on the endings, which I had hoped would at least be as cool as the opening CG.



The music in *Ehrgeiz* is just amazing! It seems Square can do no wrong with their soundtracks. Sure these may not be the godly tunes of *FF7*, but rest assured you won't find this editor complaining about this game's musical score (speaking of which, Mr. Uematsu was the sound supervisor on this one).





Graphically, *Ehrgeiz* might not be a carbon copy of its arcade counterpart, but it does come close. In fact I am willing to go so far as saying this is easily the best looking fighter on the PlayStation so far. Also, the character design in *Ehrgeiz* is stunning, not that you'd really expect anything less from the creators of *Final Fantasy* — creating memorable characters is what these guys do best (speaking of *FF*, expect to see more than a few familiar faces make an appearance in *Ehrgeiz*).







As far as gameplay goes though, *Ehrgeiz* has some serious issues. I played through the game the first few times and worked just about all the competition with only the punch button, and while this was a great way to access the endings rather quickly, I'd be willing to bet that most fighting purists would not find this feature in the game's favor.

If you're a fan of Squaresoft games you're probably waiting rather impatiently for *FF8* to come out. Well either find yourself some new hobbies to tide you over (ECM rather enjoys grinding his teeth and finding new and exciting ways to implement four letter words into all his sentences) or simply pop in *Ehrgeiz* and enjoy another quality Square fighter in the meantime. ***JF***

What's this... a quest mode in *Ehrgeiz*? And what's this... beach races, puzzles, and more. My god, who ever said that big video game companies don't have the gamers' best interest in mind. I'm telling you, those kooky guys at Square just want you to feel so, so good about your purchase of their latest fighter that they've included some pretty wacky bonus goodies!









God Bless The Dungeon?

Leave it to Square to keep the RPG alive... even in a fighting game. This is easily the best looking quest mode I've seen in a fighter since the days of *Tobal 2*, which incidentally was programmed by the same team (Dreamfactory) who masterminded *Ehrgeiz*.

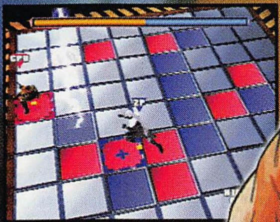


It Ain't Beach Volleyball!



For all who live in the colder regions, get ready to experience that warm sensation of beach racing in Battle Beach. Three short races in all prove who is truly worthy of the title of big kahuna!

Intelligent Qube This Ain't!



OK, so Battle Panel might be a bit on the overkill side, but I'm telling you ECM must have a friend at Squaresoft 'cause this one's got his name written all over it! For those who want to match minds rather than might.

Round 1... Run!!!!



Choose from three different courses, err, psuedo-stages and race. Don't be afraid to implement a bit of the old smack-down action cause this ain't no gentleman's race (is that Waka I see in the background?)!

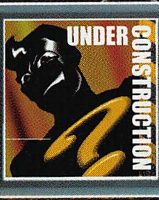
Got-To-Hang-In-There!



Survival mode... beat em' quick, though, you've got a whopping 45 seconds to prove you're not weak sauce! Besides, taking into account Cloud's almost unblockable sword attack you should have no probs with this one!

REVIEW | PlayStation

DEVELOPER - SQUARESOFT	# OF PLAYERS - 1-2
PUBLISHER - SQUARESOFT	DIFFICULTY - ADJUSTABLE
FORMAT - CD	AVAILABLE - NOW JAPAN



FURY
God bless Squaresoft!



R REVIEW — PlayStation

DEVELOPER - NAMCO
PUBLISHER - NAMCO
FORMAT - CD

\# OF PLAYERS - 1-4
DIFFICULTY - MODERATE
AVAILABLE - NOW JAPAN

DANGO
A grand tale of adventure, retold.



Klarth







If you try to grab a fistful of sand, no matter how hard you try, some of the grains will slip through your fingers. In the same respect, as avid and hard-core a gamer this dango is, there are a handful of video game titles that I have missed for one reason or another. While very few in number, there are basically two explanations I can offer: (1) Their weak-sauce nature exudes a foul enough odor that I avoid (i.e. *Shaq-Fu*, *X-perts*) or (2) I never saw a single screen of these games. The latter is an unfortunate reason, especially if the game was an exceptional title.

But once in a great while, a video game company will go out on a limb and bring out an old skool title. Such was the case when Namco brought over *Tales of Destiny*, one of the most underrated RPGs for the PlayStation. While its graphics date back to an era that was nearly extinct (2D, for you ignoramuses), its solid story and innovative gameplay allowed *ToD* to stand up to the super-hyped graphical splendor of present day RPGs. During my month long stint of playing *ToD*, I was constantly pestered by Waka, our resident import specialist, who kept saying that *Tales of Phantasia*, the prequel to *Tales of Destiny*, was much better than *ToD*. Knowing Waka was probably right, I decided to go out hunting for a Super Famicom and a version of *Tales of Phantasia*,









assuming I would never experience the supposed glory of that title any other way.

So you can imagine the scene when I heard *ToP* was coming out as a PlayStation import. Stampeding to the nearest import shop with all the speed a runaway pastry can muster, I snatched up the 'fresh off the boat' disc, did a 180 and high-tailed it back to my pad — nearly running down a bus-load of school children. And now, a shower-less, sleepless week later? I haven't had this much fun with an RPG since the year of the rat! *ToP* is a heady concoction: a *Chrono Trigger*-like story, melded with *Street Fighter*-esque battle sequences, and a classic anime presentation.

What's so special about this revived 16-bit RPG? Well, I'll tell ye faithful readers this much: if you're looking for a contender to the polygonal spectacle that is *Final Fantasy VIII*, you won't find it here. What you will find are classic 2D graphics that bring back dreamy memories of *FF3*. Despite the new 3D world map that Namco has introduced and the upgraded spell effects, the look of the game retains its Super Famicom integrity (with added anime sequences which had Waka screaming "WHY DON'T THEY MAKE AN ANIMATED SERIES?!?").

As the story starts, you take control of Cless Alven returning from a hunting trip to find his village burned and everyone massacred. Seeking vengeance, he embarks upon a search for answers. This is just the tip of the iceberg,



Arche









PS Exclusive Character!



Suzu Fujibayashi

Aside from the new graphical features and changes that the PlayStation version has, the single biggest alteration was the addition of Suzu Fujibayashi, the ninja girl. While she was present in the Super Famicom version, this time she's playable (albeit much later in the game). Aside from her ability to combo normal attacks and normal missile weapon, here are a few of the special attacks that she has right off the bat:



Izuna Otoshi
Suzu jumps way up in the sky and delivers a spinning slice attack down



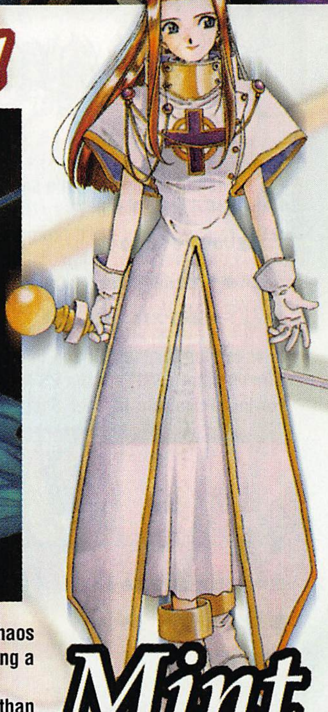
Shiranui - A quick stun attack that enables her to move past her target



Utsushimi - Conjures an after-image of herself that copies her attacks (a la *Ninja Gaiden*)



Hagakure - Suzu conjures leaves around her that enable your whole team to retreat



Mint



though, as Cless ventures to different lands, in both the past and future, to stop the evil Dhaos from usurping all the magic in the land. Along the way, you'll meet many companions including a summoner, a witch, and even a ninja (who wasn't in the original Super Famicom version!).

While ToP isn't among the most graphically spectacular RPGs ever, there are two areas that more than make up for its lack of prowess in this realm: gameplay and sound. Much like *Tales of Destiny*, *Tales of Phantasia* features the unique, "Line Battle System," an unconventional real-time combat system that allows dynamic melee battles as well as magic spells that can be built into "combos."

And then there's the sound: musically, the game once again reveals its 16-bit roots with a soundtrack that is very catchy. However, it's the amount





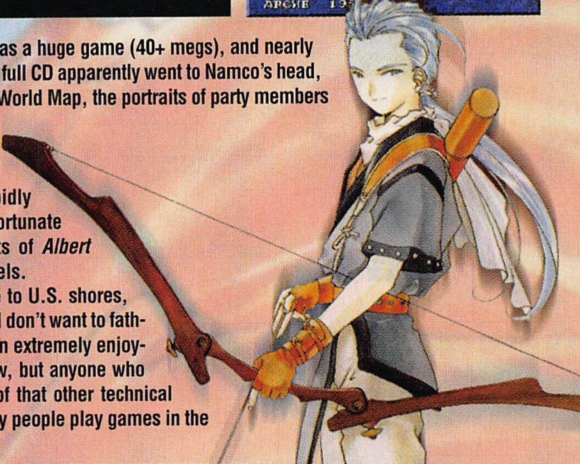




of voice in the game that truly adds to the tale. The original *Tales* was a huge game (40+ megs), and nearly half the memory was dedicated to speech alone. Having access to a full CD apparently went to Namco's head, as there's a legion of new voice as well! By pressing Select on the World Map, the portraits of party members come up on-screen as they talk to one another. While most of the dialogue involves story, much of it gives the player hints on where to go.

In fact, the only real flaw that's apparent in Tales is the stupidly high random encounter rate (it's sibling shared the same unfortunate birth defect). While it doesn't approach the dizzying heights of *Albert Odyssey* on Saturn, at times it neared controller-chucking levels.

There is a high possibility that *Tales of Phantasia* will come to U.S. shores, but the severity of the changes to the voice acting is something I don't want to fathom. Whether or not it makes the leap, *Tales of Phantasia* is an extremely enjoyable game, one that not only import RPG fans need right now, but anyone who really doesn't care about poly counts, frame rates, or any of that other technical mumbo jumbo — for people who care about fun, which is why people play games in the first place, right? ***D***





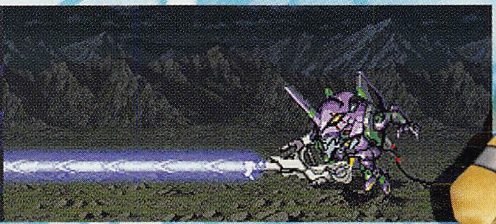
Cless

HANTASiA

Chester









Every gamer out there has a soft spot for classic games. And while I wouldn't jump through fiery hoops for the newest version of *Pong* (like Teeter), or go hip-hop-hooray for *Joust 2000* (like ECM might), I will take the reins to ensure that the general gaming public knows of the existence of *Super Robot Wars*. Spanning the early days on Super Famicom all the way across the galaxy to the Saturn's *Super Robot Wars F Complete*, the series has a storied history. Of course it was inevitable that another *SRW* would eventually grace Sony's poly-pusher (*SRW Scramble* being the first), it has arrived in the form of *Super Robot Wars F*, the prequel to *Super Robot Wars F Complete*. It was probably nothing more than a cash-run that Banpresto brought out *SRWF*, instead of creating a totally new version for the PS; and that's the unfortunate flaw of this game. With no updated features from the Saturn version, *SRWF* for the PS falls a couple charges short of a photon pack.

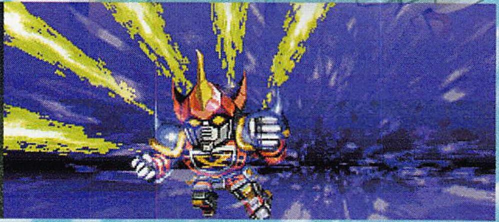
For those unaware of what *Super Robot Wars* is, allow me to explain. Take your

スーパーロボット大戦F

SUPER ROBOT WARS F







knowledge of every Japanese robot featured in assorted animes which you viewed as a child (or still do view); place them in a turn-based strategy game with a defiantly decadent 16-bit look; and include all the classic super moves and '80s-ish sound effects from their respective animes; mix on 'high' for ten minutes and voila, SRW. The *SRW* series has garnered a large following in Japan, and a sizable group of admirers in the U.S. As one of those U.S. followers, I was going 'goo-goo-ga-ga' over *Super Robot Wars F Complete* for the Saturn, and at the first mention of a *SRWF* game for the PS, I was expecting a better and updated version of *Super Robot Wars F Complete*. That's where high hopes will get you...



What we have here is all the gameplay and graphics of the Saturn version without the cool 'right out of the anime' music, which has been replaced with extra long loading times for this rev. The graphics remain true to their roots, with no improvements other than the occasional meteor here or space debris there. Yes, the gameplay is still all there, with robot troops moving in tried and true turn-based strategy. While this is all well and good for most fans of the game, I wanted to see more animation sequences (like those in *F Complete*) or some crazy new modes to play.

To top off the list of disappointments, the music is terrible (rivaling those of auto loading MIDI's on webpages... ugh) and the slightly longer loading times, that are usually tolerable, are annoying.

Bottom line: if you've been waiting for a *SRW* game on the PS, your ship has come in. Otherwise, stick to the far-superior Saturn versions. *D*



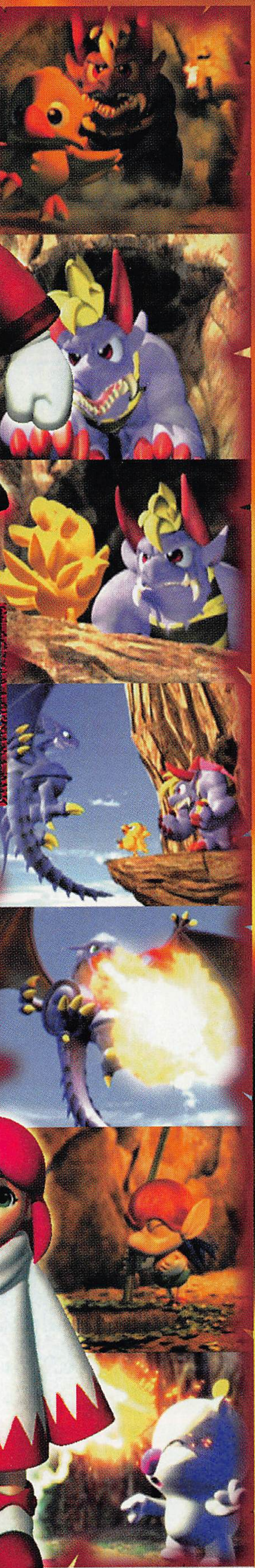
R REVIEW | PlayStation

DEVELOPER - JARSAC	# OF PLAYERS - 1
PUBLISHER - BANPRESTO	DIFFICULTY - MODERATE
FORMAT - CD	AVAILABLE - NOW JAPAN



DANGO
Sometimes bringing back old-skool isn't so cool...

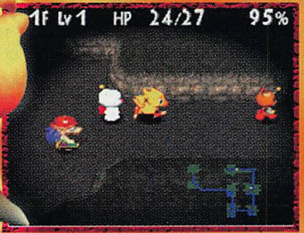
チョコボの不思議なダンジョン2







Chocobo's Mysterious Dungeon 2







One sunny, overly cheerful day in Square Land two pals were walking down an overly large, cheerful road. Chocobo and Mog, those irrepressible Square heroes from the ever popular world of *Final Fantasy*, were returning from a job well done in the adventure that came to be known as *Chocobo's Mysterious Dungeon*. Triumphant, yet persistently cheerful, our heroes strode with the air that is very becoming of multi-national superstars. But they soon came upon a new dungeon, this one more mysterious than the last. Bravely, our heroes Chocobo and Mog enter the dungeon and begin their happy quest once again...

Anyone out there remember the first adventure starring everyone's favorite chicken-esque fantasy riding beast, *Chocobo's Mysterious Dungeon*? Well, even if you don't, here's the scoop. Last year it popped out've Square's 'miscellaneous oven' to become one of Japan's most successful PlayStation games. By miscellaneous I'm talking about Square's tendency lately to create games that are so typically UN-Square-like it's hard to believe that they're from the same company... only thing is that they star the company's bigger characters. From fighting games to racers, Square's certainly branched off. While I'm always the first one to commend a bit of originality, one thing's become quite apparent: Square Must Stop! Seriously, here's this company known far and wide for creating the world's greatest RPGs yet they continue on their quest to diversify themselves, and look bad doing it. Here's *Chocobo's Mysterious Dungeon 2*, a sequel to a game that sold incredibly well, but was incredibly bad.

A pairing of two likely heroes, Chocobo and Mog, enter the dark and mysterious dungeon in an effort to collect treasure, explore and basically have tons of fun. Not exactly the type of 'epic' associated with Square's other efforts (well, it might be epic to 6 year olds), but it does get the job done.

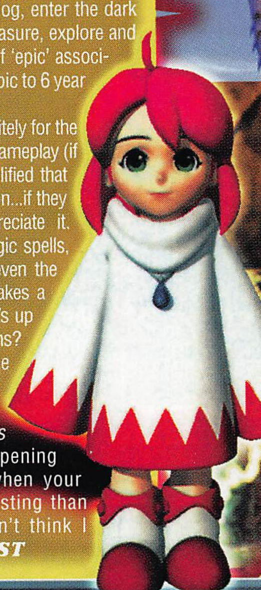
There's no denying it, this game is definitely for the younger set...the really younger set. The gameplay (if you can call it that) is so basic and simplified that nobody should have a problem catching on...if they can stay awake long enough to appreciate it. Typically Square, there are the usual magic spells, transformations and yes (wait for it...) even the dreaded "I'll Put you to Sleep!" spell makes a showing. Gee, I'm won over! And what's up with randomly generated dungeons? Sure, they were kinda cool back in the day... er, wait a second! Those things were NEVER cool!

But in *Chocobo's Mysterious Dungeon 2's* defense, the opening cinema is quite cool. But when your game's cinema is more interesting than the actual game, well... I don't think I need to say anything more. ***ST***







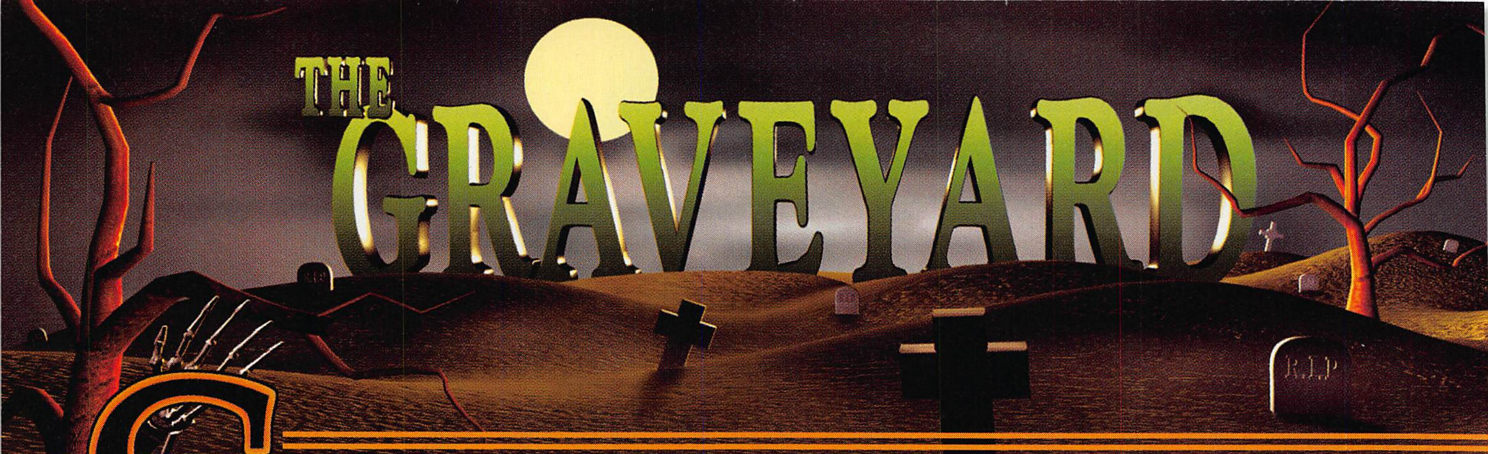


R REVIEW | PlayStation

DEVELOPER - SQUARE	# OF PLAYERS - 1
PUBLISHER - SQUARE	DIFFICULTY - EASY
FORMAT - CD	AVAILABLE - NOW JAPAN

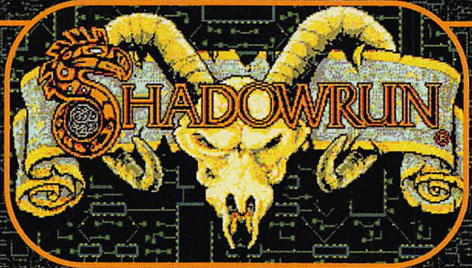


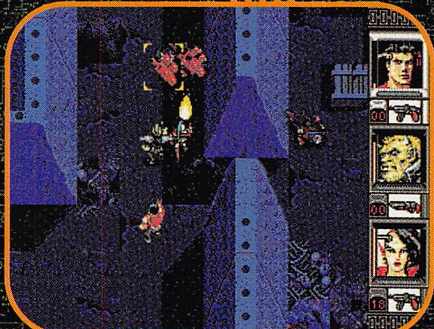
SUPER TEETER
Chocobos have their own theme song!



SHADOWRUN







We all have personal lists of what we think are the best games ever made; games that, in some way, enriched our playing experiences and captured our imaginations . My list has a tendency to change (I'm a bit fickle), but there are certain few titles that always manage to rise to the top: *Bard's Tale*, *Aztec*, *NHL 99*, *Pirates* and this gem of a Genesis title: *Shadowrun*.





GOODBYE OLD DETROIT

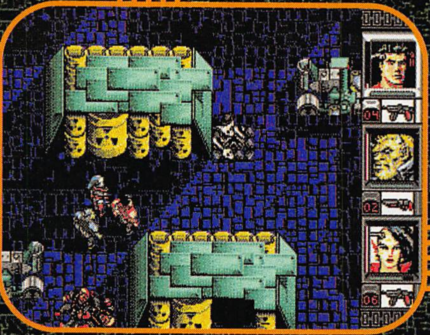
In the not-so-distant future (picture a cross between *Blade Runner* and *Johnny Mnemonic*), the world's major cities have deteriorated into jungles where the criminal element thrives, while major corporations control everything from the police to the government (think OCP, in *Robocop*). A second plane of existence has developed in the form of a cyber-space world known as the Matrix. Corporations keep all of their secrets buried here, behind walls made up of powerful security software.

Slinking in the shadows of these monolithic corporations and crumbling remnants of yesterday are the shadowrunners, futuristic mercenaries who make a living "solving problems" for those with the money to pay them. Seattle is a hot spot for this activity and men known as "Mr. Johnsons" dole out big bucks for your services. The "runs" range from simple mule work to escort duty, strong-arming, breaking into the local police station and hacking the Matrix.





The background story has you, Joshua, coming to Seattle to find out what happened to your brother, who was one of these shadowrunners. He was killed during some snafu, but the circumstances surrounding his demise are fishy. In order to find out what you need to know, you too, become a shadowrunner.







The best character to be is a decker, because you'll want to be able to jack into the Matrix early on (it is possible to sell downloaded data for a pretty penny).



While there are many runners available, Winston will prove the most valuable. Hire him permanently... and early.



To get a jump on things, do most of your early running for Mortimer. His simple Matrix runs tend to be quick and pay well.



Upgrade your cyberdeck and software first. The best money is in the Matrix runs.



This dude will pay top dollar for any info you manage to steal from the Matrix.



Breaking into corporate headquarters can be dangerous, but very profitable.



There a lot of shady characters to be encountered in the streets of Seattle, so watch your step.

SHADOWRUNNERS

There are three possible classes to choose in *Shadowrun*. You can become a soldier, specializing in weapons and muscle; a decker, who is the most adept at hacking the Matrix; or a magic-user, knowledgeable in the arcane disciplines of spell-casting. While you will be on your own at the start, you can hire up to two more runners. These runners can be found in the various Seattle bars and will join you for a price. One-time runs or lifetime partnerships can be "purchased". For every successful run you make with a certain shadowrunner, his or her asking price will drop, so go on a bunch of one-time missions before purchasing their permanent services; this'll save you a bunch of cash.

Your character(s) gain experience in the form of "karma." The more runs you make (and people you kill) the more karma you will gain. You can then distribute it amongst your many statistics.

The many shops and a black market give you a healthy selection of weapons, armor, magic and cyberdecks. Upgrades can be purchased such as cyber-implants, laser sites and better cyberdeck software. It is possible to customize your characters and their equipment quite a bit.

"HIT ME..."

The Matrix plays a major role in the game. You'll spend about half the time surfing through company servers, stealing information and crashing their computers. The visual representation of the Matrix is clever, and the gameplay, for these forays into cyberspace, is very entertaining. Your little "virtual runner" will fly around, attempting to break security software. These attempts will be represented by battles, where your ethereal body will attack the security measures with offensive software. Make sure you've got the proper equipment when you take on those high-level companies, or you may just get fried... Don't expect to finish the game unless you've mastered running the Matrix.

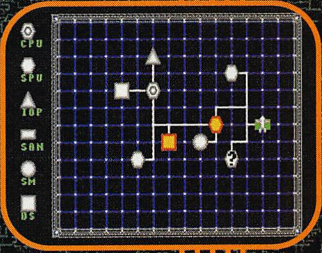
TO RUN OR NOT TO RUN

What propels you to continue running is the quest to find your brother's killer. Information doesn't come cheap, though, and it isn't until you've become one of the top shadowrunners that you'll find yourself in the position to put all of the puzzle pieces together — and then exact the proper revenge. The total hours of gameplay is well over forty, and that is just to find out your brother's killer. Just because you do this doesn't mean you have to stop playing. You can continue to shadowrun, breaking into corporations and pirating the internet. Also, the variety of runs and many options available to you, during gameplay, gives *Shadowrun* a very high replay value. Lord, how I wish this game would be remade for the Dreamcast. ***EN***











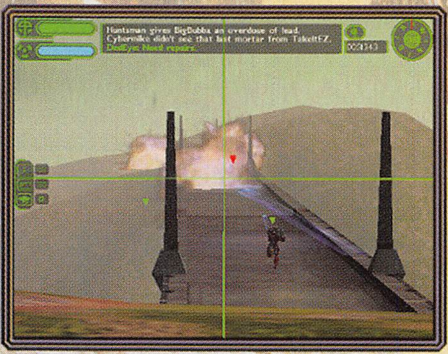














It took 'em long enough, but someone finally came out and admitted that, with the exception of Valve's peerless *Half-Life*, no one really gives a flying flip about the single-player aspect of the modern FPS title. It's all about the deathmatch these days, gang, and Dynamix could have gone the route of id's upcoming *Quake 3 Arena* or Epic's *Unreal Tournament*... but they decided to do something a bit different, and the results are a game so unique and intense that it demands attention from any serious action fan.

StarSiege: Tribes comes to us as the physical embodiment of this "something different"... and man oh man, is it slick! Get one thing straight from the get-go, folks... this ain't *Quake 2*, and the more you try to pretend it is, the less success you will have. The name of the game here is team combat, and while it may take a bit of getting used to, the end results will hand you a gaming experience unlike any you have seen before.

Unlike most head-to-head Internet games, *Tribes* requires a bit more from the average gung-ho gamer than the simple "kill anything that moves" mentality. The game offers a

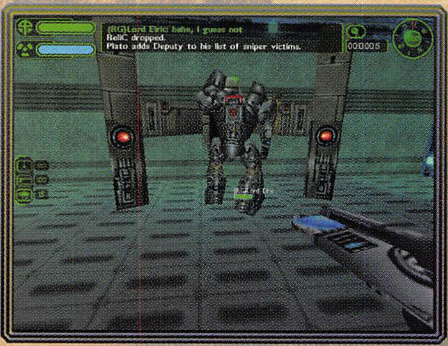
TRI

slew of different roles per team, and due to the killer level design, you simply cannot run in 'balls-out' and come out alive, unless you are really good at what you do. The game's complexity requires that you work within a group to get the job done, and thankfully, there are plenty of things to keep you busy.





The role of your character is basically designed around the armor you select, and from there the type of player you are really depends on the mission objective and your willingness to take one for the team. Take the heavy armor set. These guys are basically your run-of-the-mill thugs. They are big, slow, and pack one helluva punch. If you just gotta blow someone away while playing *Tribes*, suit up as one of these bruisers and clear the way for the specialists. Or, if you want, *Tribes* offers a slew of vehicles. A teammate of mine in one session took the role of an APC pilot the entire game, and we wouldn't have won the day without him. Of course, if you really want to get crazy, you can choose the light armor set and run interference for infantry units or risk life and limb to target for the artillery guys. And this is just the beginning... You just have to hop on and find your role to really see what I am talking about, but *Tribes* does a great job of encouraging various styles of play, and when you finally find your niche, you'll be surprised at how much fun you're having playing a role... this is, after all, an action game!

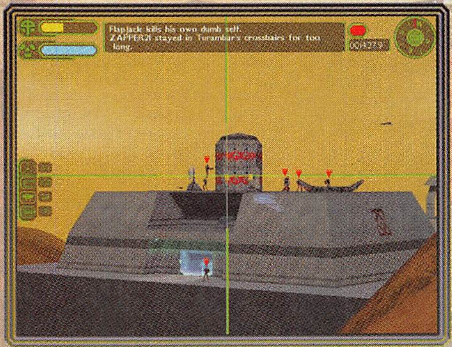


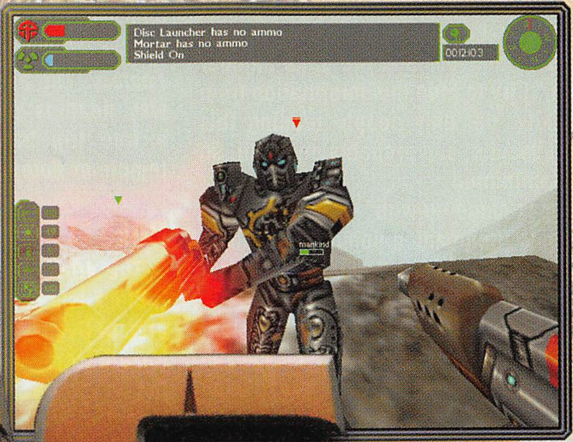
STARSEIGE:TRIBES
Developer: Dynamix
Publisher: Sierra
Difficulty: Hard Baby!
Number of Players: 2-128
Available: Now



Weapons-wise, you can do a good deal of swapping there as well. The game will allow you to buy and sell weapons to get the perfect configuration for your playing style, and you can even buy and drop artillery units at various points in the game to help expand and protect your team's fortress... or simply make trouble in a well-known route of enemy attack. As a cool side note, you can also personally man a computer controlled laser tower anywhere on your base! Each weapon also features a sniper function, which is loads of fun in the heat of combat.

Perhaps the biggest boost to gameplay in *Tribes* is the level design itself. The levels feature vast outdoor environments that are geography-intensive, and each team has its own base that is usually large and well defended by AI-controlled, stationary units. Each player comes equipped with a jetpack that has allowed the designers to do some amazing things with the game's layout, as they have really taken advantage of the idea of realistic physics and demanding navigation. You really have to be able to work your player around the map to be effective, and









though the game will require many hours of play out of you to gain even a slight grip on the ins-and-outs of controlling your player, the results are well worth it. There's just nothing quite like taking a blind leap across a canyon while dodging multiple laser blasts and StormHammer disks, as you use the lay of the land to shield you from enemy fire, only to use your pack to reach an airborne bunker, barely making the jump before your pack's energy meter hits bottom, only to get snipered by an enemy sharp-shooter at the edge of the recharge station... sooo close!

Two pages really isn't enough to touch on all the awesome features *Tribes* brings into play, but if you are a FPS fan and are patient enough to learn how to walk the walk, this game is simply a great title to play with your buds, and if you're into fast-paced multi-player action but have had your fill of *Quake 2*, this could be just the thing to tide you over till the next round of FPS titles hit the shelves.



Special thanks to Mew-two for the training help!

















AN AD&D RANT

I have a deep, dark secret: I'm an *AD&D* sausage (yes, all of you *AD&D* players are sausages, don't let your mom tell you any different). When I was younger I was so into *Dungeons & Dragons* that I can, to this day, cite the *Player's Handbook* and the page number which the info is on. I try to hide this information from my friends... Luckily, the only people reading this review are fellow sausages, and probably my mom, so my reputation goes untainted.

When E. Gary Gygax came up with the *D&D* mythos and its many offshoots (Companion being my personal fave) he created the most in-depth, fantastic world, ever. I am emboldened to even say that Rodenberry, Tolkien, Lovecraft, and Lucas failed to match his vision, in scope or creativity. Any world where you can go against the giants, descend into the depths, or sail to an



"After the bloodlust dissipates, you are left knee-high in carnage."

isle of dread is an incredible world to visit. This license is pure gold, and Interplay looks to be cashing in.

While I still think Interplay is fumbling the ball (and consequently doing gamers a great disservice) by not releasing several *AD&D* titles, including updates of the classics (who wouldn't want to see *White Plume Mountain*, *Tower Over Inverness* or *Ravenloft* as PC games?)... to at least see one is a God-send. *Baldur's Gate*, an adventure set in the Forgotten Realms, is as exciting and engrossing a title as you could hope for.

For those of you unfamiliar with the 'rules' in *AD&D* (fools), let's just start out by saying that all of the mechanics you are used to in those cookie-cutter Japanese RPGs, goes right out the window. Leveling-up is much harder; good equipment isn't as easy to come by; and spell points are nowhere to be seen; this is a man's RPG world. Once a spell is cast, it is lost to you until you re-memorize it; items aren't instantly recognizable to you; and a good night's sleep won't replenish your hit points. The *AD&D* world is much tougher and more 'realistic' than those other games... ahem, *Final Fantasy*. Oh, and by the way, death is *death*, not a free trip back to a temple or homestead.

DOES IT DO AD&D JUSTICE?

The *AD&D* devotees are a picky lot. If Black Isle had screwed up in any area of Gygax's original rules and parameters, the game would be suspect. I am happy to report that all of the *AD&D* nuances are present, from the familiar classes (and multi-classes) and races, to equipment restrictions, 'magic items, and monsters (although some of the creatures are not from *Monster Manual*, although I can't be certain if they show up in *Deities and Demigods* or *MM2*). You'll recognize terms such as Lore, THACO, and infravision as well as *AD&D*-specific spells like Cloudkill, Shillelagh, and Melf's Acid Arrow. This is the *AD&D* world to a tee.

AND SO THE STORY GOES...

Something evil has descended over The Sword Coast and the



BALDUR'S GATE
Developer: Bioware
Publisher: Interplay
Difficulty: Challenging
Number of Players: 1-6 (on-line)
Available: Now









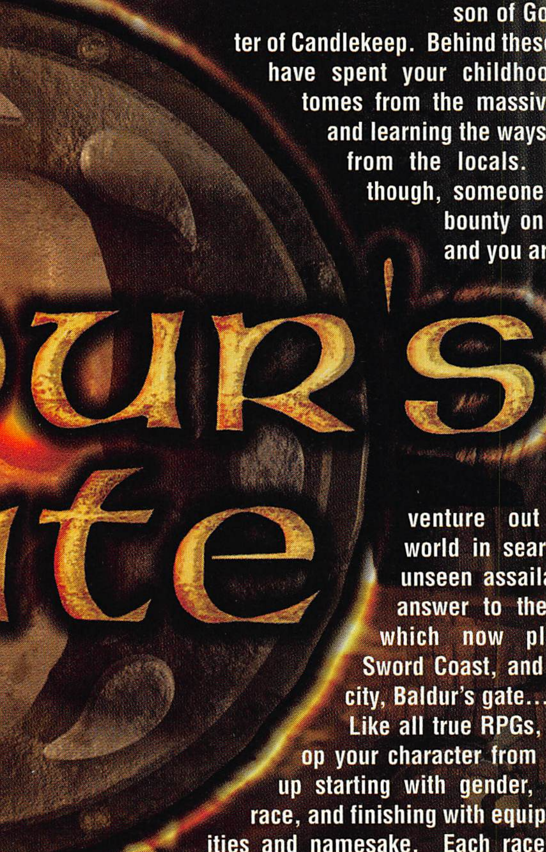






"Some nights, you may be visited by the dead, in visions."





surrounding areas. There's an iron ore shortage, bandits are marauding caravans, and an unusually high number of monsters are on the prowl. You are the adopted son of Gorion, master of Candlekeep. Behind these walls you have spent your childhood reading tomes from the massive libraries and learning the ways of fighting from the locals. Recently, though, someone has put a bounty on your head and you are forced to venture out into the world in search of your unseen assailant and an answer to the problems which now plague The Sword Coast, and its largest city, Baldur's gate...

Like all true RPGs, you develop your character from the ground up starting with gender, class, and race, and finishing with equipment, abilities and namesake. Each race and class comes with its own pros and cons and one's alignment can affect one's standing with many of the denizens of the realm. Once out the Candlekeep's doors, you will travel the countryside, doing errands, solving problems and accepting quests. While the game will pull you towards a specific, inevitable conclusion, your path will be your own.

The graphics and sound of *Baldur's Gate* are exquisite. The scenery is lush, the score is epic, and the detail of characters and monsters is impressive. The player view is from above, in standard 3/4 omnipotent angle and movement is of the point-and-click variety. Your party will be able to hold up to six adventurers, and everything is completely customizeable, from party formation and posture all the way down to the ability to import your own pictures for character visages.

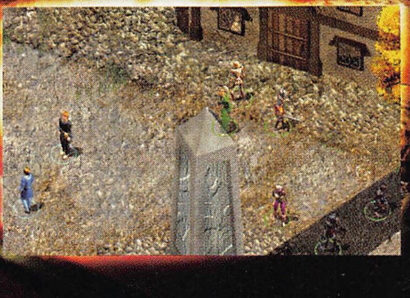
The battle animations, especially the spellcasting, are beautiful. To watch the spattering blood and magical pyrotechnics make each confrontation very exciting, made more so by the music and sound effects (listen to those battle cries and the cold clash of steel!).

Baldur's Gate's only downside is the combat system. A real-time experience, it can become quite chaotic during major battles, making it hard to control. The option to pause and make decisions is possible, but the pace is disrupted and it can be hard to gauge the turn sequences once combat resumes. After a bit of practice, though, this will be less and less an issue and thus, doesn't merit much more than this brief mention.

Like *Fallout 2*, *Baldur's Gate* is a long game, requiring mucho hours of gameplay. You'll have barely scratched the surface when you're 20 or 30 hours in; now *that's* bang for your buck. I find it very hard to believe that a better RPG will be released this year... and with so much time left in 1999, that's saying a lot!









"Everything's a pretty red with infravision."

The Demon Is Born Again ...



neo... AnimeFan

More than just "the anime section" - Anime, Manga, Asian Live-Action, J-pop, Culture, and all related products.

I just got my hands on the January issue of GameFan, and came to a realization - the backgrounds on my re-designed AnimeFan were TOO dark, making some of the text a bit hard to read. -_-;; [apologizes] We all make mistakes, ne? Anyhow, I think I've got another great issue of AnimeFan for you, and check out the ongoing contest, which has both been changed a bit and has been expanded to allow time for more people to enter. Ah, almost out of room! I know the look of AnimeFan keeps getting tweaked a bit, but hey, nothing is ever perfect the first time. - shidoshi

Listen to this



NightWarriors: The Anime

Original Soundtrack
Viz Music

I had no idea what to really expect from this, as I couldn't remember a track of the music from either the game or the anime to save my life. Koh Ohtani's score is a strange mixture of synth and rock-ish type beats laced with elegant piano, brassy horns, or a variety of other dark and haunting melodies. This gives his music a sort of "fragility amongst chaos" feel (which fits the anime perfectly). There's a wide selection of music to be found here, and I think this one fits soundly into the "good anime soundtrack" category - so all fans out there might want to take a listen. And, strange as this may be, I can't shake the feeling that this would make the perfect soundtrack to some new shooter. [shrugs] - shidoshi



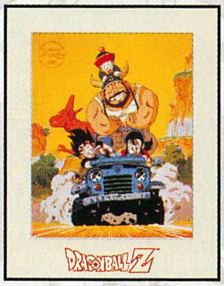
Resident Evil 2

Original Soundtrack
Viz Music

What's this? You say that you didn't know that Resident Evil 2 HAD a soundtrack, besides some short pieces of atmospheric music? The music contained on this soundtrack is unmistakable "video game music," but that isn't such a bad thing. Be prepared for some WILD differences in music from track to track - for example, "The Front Hall" (track eight) is typical rockin' '80s guitar solo, while the next track, "The First Floor," is an elegant and moody tune with familiar notes that will have you take notice and think, "Oh yeah, I remember that part!" This is a pretty cool soundtrack, and I definitely recommend it to all RE fans (non-fans may enjoy it, but I think you'll like it better if you've played the game and recognize some of the music). And yeah, okay, it's not ANIME ... but, uhm, it's from Viz, and hey, what are you complaining for anyhow? - shidoshi

Goods Showcase

Chroma-Cels



Two issues ago I mentioned the new run of Chroma-Cels based around the anime versions of Capcom's fighting game NightWarriors, and this issue, I bring you information on their next run of titles - DragonBall Z and Sailor Moon. These two anime TV series' have both had successful (and often times interesting) runs on American TV, so it's only fitting that they come out hand in hand with a simultaneous release. If there's one thing that the previous Chroma-Cels have been known for, it's the reproduction of high-quality art from each anime title, and it's no different this time (you just gotta love that DBZ jeep pic, even if you aren't a fan of the series). My only complaint is that the art used for the SM group shot only shows four of the five Sailor Scouts, excluding Shidoshi's favorite, Sailor Venus. This was due to technical reasons, and I was assured that in the future, a full group shot Chroma-Cel WOULD be released. Ani-Magine's new Sailor Moon and DragonBall Z Chroma-Cels should be their biggest and best titles yet, and both sets of cels should be out in stores as you read this.

Pokemania

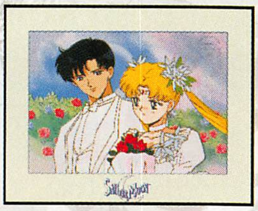
If you haven't been to your local toy retailer anytime recently, then be aware that a flood of toys based on the phenomenon simply known as Pokemon is out there just waiting for you to purchase them. One such toy that I was seduced into buying is the Pocket Pikachu, the little "virtual pet Pikachu" from Nintendo. The idea is simple - take a Tamagotchi, throw in a pedometer (a device that counts how many steps you've taken), and there you go. Once you start up your little Pikachu, it's actually quite simple: for every few steps you take, you build up one "watt" on your Pocket Pikachu. Then, after you've built up a decent amount of watts, you give them to Pikachu to make him happy. There's no feeding him, no cleaning up, no Pikachu getting sick, none of that. Sounds easy, right? Wrong. A friend of mine, Mizu, said it best when she said, "Pikachu ... greedy little bastards." These things demand watts - a LOT of them - and soon you'll find yourself walking around or doing different things simply to help feed his lust for power. Sure, you can make the argument that it's supposed to encourage you to exercise more, but I ended up feeling more like its slave, spending my time taking him places simply to satisfy his neverending hunger. To be honest, I think the stupid things are actually energy containers from an alien race to help them build up power to conquer the Earth. Beyond that, there's little to do here, as the Pocket Pikachu has only one other option - a slot machine game. I WILL say that this is the best game on any "virtual pet" I've seen, as it's actually skill based, but I would SWEAR that the last reel cheats. - shidoshi

Feed me!









AnimeFan's Top 10 Titles of 1998

#1: Kiki's Delivery Service



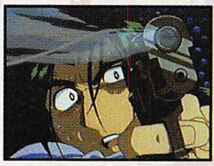
#2: Revolutionary Girl Utena



#3: Neon Genesis Evangelion



#4: Giant Robo



#5: Birdy the Mighty



It's the AnimeFan / Software Sculptors / Revolutionary Girl Utena

AnimeFan's Revolution Contest

In celebration of AnimeFan's "revolution" (aka new look), AnimeFan and Software Sculptors are teaming up to give one lucky winner an awesome prize - a copy of the Revolutionary Girl Utena VHS box set! The first four volumes of Revolutionary Girl Utena, packed up with an additional little gift (even I'm not sure what it is) all in a nice box with, I'm sure, lots of lovely Utena artwork all over it (I have yet to see pictures of the boxset, so...).

How to Win?

See the collage in the background of these pages? Your mission is to name all fifteen (15) anime titles that are shown in this collage. All entries who correctly guess all 15 will go into a drawing, and the person whose name is drawn wins! Simple as that! Uhm ... however ... should nobody correctly guess all 15 anime titles, then the person with the most correct answers will win. ^_^

The Rules

All entries must be mailed in by March 31st, 1999. (yes, the contest was extended) Only one entry per person per household. No purchase necessary, void where prohibited. Cute girls mailing in telling Shidoshi how wonderful he is, while certainly appreciated and encouraged, will not be given special treatment.

How to Enter

Mail your Full Name, Address, Age, Telephone Number, and E-mail Address, along with your list of 15 answers, to:

AnimeFan
"Revolution Contest"
6301 DeSoto Avenue
Unit #E
Woodland Hills, CA
91367

No entries via e-mail, please. The "Anime Survival Kit" contest will still happen - promise.



Artwork by Chiho Saitoh

AnimeFan rates each anime title that we cover in one of six different areas, with a rating of A+ to F-. Please be aware that the actual letter grade is just as important as any + or - attached to it - a grade of B+ may mean a quality B title, but it is still not as good as an A-.

Guide to Ratings Codes

We'll use this example:
Sub | Dub
VHS | LD | DVD

Black: The title is available in that format/language. So, for our example, the title is out in both Sub and Dub on VHS.

Underlined: The version being reviewed. So, we're reviewing the VHS Sub version.

Greyed: Not available. So, our title isn't out on LD.

Red: Coming soon/planned. Our example title is planned for release on DVD.

Send comments, letters, artwork to:

AnimeFan
6301 DeSoto Avenue
Unit #E
Woodland Hills, CA
91367

Or :
shidoshi@gamefan.com

CORRECTION

I unfortunately mistyped the website address for Apollo Smile's official website. [sigh] It SHOULD have read:

www.apolloites.org

Manga Scene

In December, the US was introduced to two new anime magazines, Manga Max and AnimeFantastique. Now, I'm not exactly going to be reviewing them or anything, but I did want to take a few minutes to let you know about them in the interest of information.

AnimeFantastique

The Idea

From the people who bring you the very popular movie magazine, CinemaFantastique, comes a new magazine covering the world of animation.

Content

People expecting an "anime" magazine may be very disappointed - AnimeFantastique covers all animation, not just anime. Seems to be more of a magazine for people looking for info on the behind-the-scenes world of animation over, and not the more serious anime and manga fans.

Price

$5.99

Release

Quarterly

Manga Max

The Idea

Manga Max isn't exactly a "new" magazine - the premier issue is actually issue #47 of the UK anime magazine Manga Mania, re-named for it's launch over here on our shores.

Content

Covers all of the basics, and seems to do it well, with special mention of the Asian cinema coverage, and big props for giving space for fanzines and events.

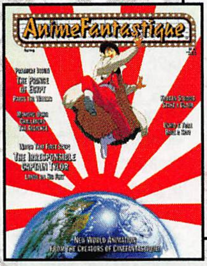
Price

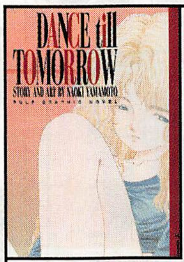
$5.99

Release

Monthly







Dance till Tomorrow

Probably my absolute favorite of the manga titles included in Pulp, Dance till Tomorrow is the story of Suekichi, average college student and struggling actor who suddenly finds out that he's going to be inheriting a large sum of money. However, the morning after finding this out, another surprise comes into his life - Aya, a hardly dressed girl who begins acting like his girlfriend. But is she around for honest reasons, or just because she's after his money? Funny and slightly racy, Dance till Tomorrow is an enjoyable story with a wonderfully kooky quality to it.

Return of Lum: Ran Attacks!

Without question, at least to me, the manga version of Urusei Yatsura is a thousand times better than the anime version: just for some reason, while I get outrageous laughs from the manga, the anime just never seems to translate the jokes over well. This issue starts out with a dash of the supernatural, from love potions to a party with the gods, then Lum's rival Ran makes her return, and as normal, wacky comedy is soon to follow. As always, fun stuff. - shidoshi



1998

ALL TITLES HAD TO HAVE BEEN RELEASED IN WHOLE OR PART IN 1998. LIST BASED SOLELY ON SHIDOSHI'S OPINION.

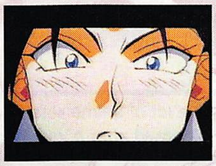
#6: Key: The Metal Idol



#7: Vision of Escaflowne



#8: Slayers - The Motion Picture



#9: Irresponsible Captain Tylor



#10: Night Warriors - the Anime





AF Reviews

What's playing in anime this month

Battle Athletes: Ready

Comedy • OAV • Pioneer Ent. • 13+
60 min • Sub | Dub • VHS | LD | DVD
A-

In the far future, war has gotten to a point where it no ever solved anything. Now, the way that different people and races work out their differences is through athletic competition. The people of Earth enter a new era of physical fitness, wanting to achieve the most that they personally can, so specific schools are set up to train both men and women to be the best human competitors in the galaxy. For girls, the highest possible goal they can reach is "Cosmic Beauty" - the best female athlete there is. That is the dream of Akari Kanzaki - her mother was once the Cosmic Beauty, and now Akari wants to walk in her mother's footsteps. But where Akari was the top of her class back on Earth, she finds that life at the University is far different, and that if she wants to win, she's going to have to push herself to her very limits.

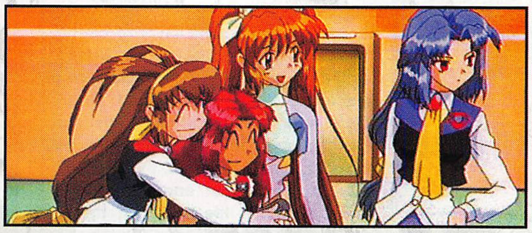
The biggest props for BA certainly go to the character designs - their personalities come through beautifully, having a cast that is shockingly strong and promising right from the start. The sign of any truly "successful" show (be it anime or live) is getting you to care about the cast, and by the end of the first volume, I was both liking the heroes and absolutely hating Mylandah (the show's "villain") with a passion. Even at times when the storyline is rather weak (which happens a number of times), Akari and crew keep things from stalling. I won't kid myself, though - Battle Athletes isn't the next great series, like a Tenchi or Evangelion or Escaflowne. But, to be honest, I don't think it's trying to be. It simple wants you to sit down, watch, and enjoy what you see, and in that regard, it's a strong contender. - shidoshi



Agent Aika: Naked Mission

Adv/Cmdy• OAV • US Manga • 15+
60 min • Sub | Dub • VHS | LD | DVD
B-

It's the future, and as always, the Earth just hasn't gotten along very well; in this vision, most of the planet is now underwater. The story opens with an introduction to the sexy and sophisticated Aika, and her slightly more cutesy partner Rion. Aika and Rion are some of the best Scavengers in the world - people who will retrieve any item that you want for the right price. Business isn't going so well for the girls, so when Aika is one again asked to go on a dangerous mission to retrieve data on a new, wondrous source of power, the large sum of money offered just can't be passed up. But have Aika and Rion gotten themselves into something much larger than they can handle? If there are three words that come to mind when watching Aika, they are: fanservice, fanservice, fanservice. I mean ... geeze. [nervous laugh] Let's just say that if you feel that there just aren't enough panty shots in anime these days, this one title will pretty much make up for ALL other anime. The dub is your standard fair, not really exceptionally good or bad either way, with one exception - one of the rival Scavengers, at times, sounds EXACTLY like Joe Chin from PaRappa (which got a laugh from me every time I heard him). I don't want you thinking that I thought Aika was bad, because I didn't, I just found myself blushing after a while due to how much fanservice there is in this one. I think Aika would be a far stronger title if it took itself a bit more seriously and wasn't SO gratuitous with some of the scenes, but it's certainly not a title that I would tell you to pass up checking out (especially if you've read this review and are sitting there saying, "MAN, that sounds just like my kinda show!"). [hehe] - shidoshi



Strange Love

Hentai • OAV • US Manga • 18+
80 min • Sub | Dub • VHS | LD | DVD
B-

I've had a number of people disagree with my opinion on this one, but Strange Love is one of my favorite hentai titles. Why? Well, it's naughty, and a bit controversial, but not overbearing; it's got a bit of spice compared to most "softer" hentai titles, yet it's thankfully not one of those demon or tentacle shows. It's the tale of one Yoshida Chizuru, the beautiful, arrogant girl that we all have known at one point or another. She toys with guys without a second thought, and when she wants something, she gets it. But life suddenly goes into a tailspin for her when she finds herself falling in love! Suddenly her attitude changes, and she finds herself as flighty and nervous as a schoolgirl with a crush. Could Yoshida REALLY be in love? Or, more importantly, can she save the object of her affection from the evils of the world? Strange Love is certainly strange, and while there are never really any hardcore "adult" situations, it still is certainly a title for the older crowd, some of the subjects in it won't be for everyone, and the art IS a bit wacky. But if you like fun anime and have an open mind, you might check this one out. - shidoshi

Ninja Resurrection

Adventure • TV • ADV Films • 18+
40 min • Sub | Dub • VHS | LD | DVD
B+

Ninja Scroll - understand it or not, it's without doubt one of the most popular anime titles ever released in the US. So what better to be released than a sequel to such a hot title? Well ... don't go so fast. Many have mistakenly believed that Ninja Ressurection is the sequel to NS (and the text on the back of NR's box doesn't really help to dispel the rumor), but it is just that: a rumor. The main character from this story, Jubei, is simply based on the historical character "Yagyu Jubei," just as the Jubei from Ninja Scroll, or even the Jubei from SNK's Samurai Shodown are. So who is this Jubei? A sword for hire, brought in to help turn the side in favor of the Japanese armies in a battle against a Christian stronghold. Jubei and his army gets the job done, and it comes down to a standoff between Jubei and the Christian group's leader, Shiro Amakusa. But evil lurks in the ranks of the Christian people, and a dire prophecy is fulfilled: if the new Christian king, Amakusa, is killed and unable to carry out his destiny, his soul will go dark and he will be reborn as Satan himself. Ninja Resurrection sets itself up well for future volumes, setting the scene for a possibly epic tale once it's all said and done (though Jubei's followers need to be introduced to us properly, or else they will fall by the wayside as nothing more than filler). Especially of note is the soundtrack, which is always very powerful and is a good example of how music can really add to the drama and excitement of a production. This one has a bit of the "ultra violence," and some anti-Christianity sentiment (though it also shows the darkness on the side of the Japanese and their treatment of the religion as well), so this one isn't going to be for all viewers. But if you like anime like Ninja Scroll, the Hakkenden, or their like, it's a good bet that you'll enjoy this one. - shidoshi

AF Trivia: Answer Last Page

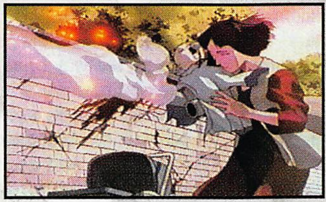
Star Trek has a lot of anime references put into it in a variety of ways. What race of aliens from the Star Trek world is named after a very popular anime character?

You were expecting something cute down here, weren't you?

Darkside Blues

Dark Adv. • Movie • US Manga • 16+
83 min • Sub | Dub • VHS | LD | DVD **B+**

Since I just watched it recently (and since I'm on a movie comparison kick this issue), I couldn't help but think of Dark City quite often while watching Darkside Blues. Both movies take place in a world that never fully seems real, both plunge their inhabitants into a life where it's hard to separate meaning from simple existence. We are presented with a rather dark and surreal future where a small piece of life is controlled from beyond by outside forces, and everyone seems to both know exactly where they are in life and have no clue at all of the truth of their existence. A shadowy figure appears as if an apparition, a young man named Darkside who has the power to bring down those who control and oppose the world. Who is he, why is he here, and what connection does he have to Persona Century Corporation? Even as the last bits of freedom begin to crumble around him, those he touches realize his power and stand next to him in his fight. But can one simple man actually bring down a company that has taken over the entire world? I didn't go into DSB with many expectations, but was very surprised by what I saw. Be warned, as this is one of those types of movies that is both enjoyable yet somewhat hard to watch at the same time - you really have to be in the right mood before sitting down to truly get into this one. At the end of the story we are left with as many questions unanswered as were answered, yet that is the nature of the world of Darkside Blues, and over-explanation would only serve to take away part of the mystique. Not much fanfare has gone around about this one, but I really think it's one for the "sleeper hit" list. - shidoshi



Maison Ikkoku: All's Well that Ends (in a Well)

Comedy • OAV • Viz Video • 11+
52 min • Sub | Dub • VHS | LD | DVD **B**

I've said it before, and I'll say it again - Maison Ikkoku is leaps and bounds above Rumiko Takahashi's other top-tier anime titles. Ranma 1/2? Perfect example of a show that keeps adding characters to try to liven up the show, only to totally overload it. Urusei Yatsura? Not nearly as funny as the manga version. But MI ... ahh, this is a wonderful little anime. The story is simple - a small group of tenants and their "manager" living in a run-down building - but the story, characters, and proper mix of comedy and drama bring it together, and do it well. Another aspect that isn't exactly original is the main relationship, that between frustrated student Godai and the beautiful landlord Kyoko. These two belong together, but alas, each cannot fully admit to their feelings, and we watch as they go through life so close to being together, yet so far away (their relationship makes Mulder and Scully look like newlyweds). This conflict is shown well on this volume; the first episode brings us a nice helping of comedy, but things slide into seriousness with the coming of the second episode. Due to a serious misunderstanding (ah, the horror of rumors), it seems that the tenants of Maison Ikkoku believe that Kyoko has finally agreed to give her hand in marriage ... to Godai's main rival for her attention. Godai, not able to take the idea, packs up a few meager things and moves out. As the last scene of Kyoko standing in the rain after finding out Godai has a new lover (or so she thinks), we are left wondering just how things will work out. MI isn't always comedy, but when it is, it's much more down to earth and subtle than the "beating you over the head" stuff of some of Miss Takahashi's other titles. I also give great credit to Viz for producing one of the best-sounding dubs I've yet to hear (this is a dub that doesn't FEEL like a dub). Almost any type of anime fan should like this one. - shidoshi

Bite Me! Chameleon

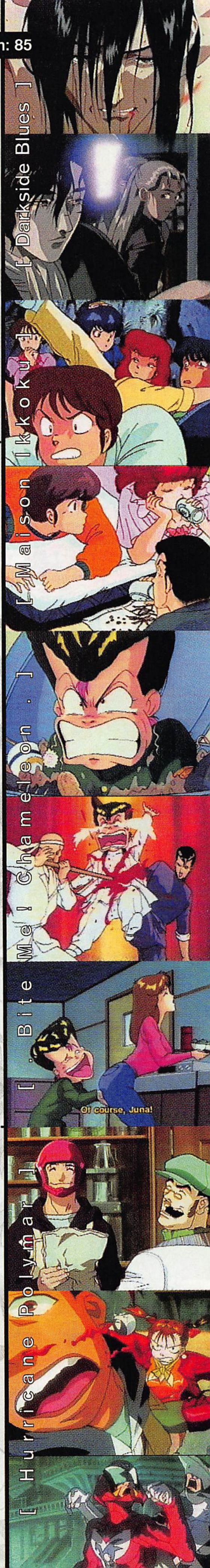
Comedy • OAV • ADV Films • 17+
60 min • Sub | Dub • VHS | LD | DVD **B-**

It wasn't too long ago when comedy like Junk Boy and Goldenboy were considered to be the "racy" comedies of the US anime scene. Boy, has that ever changed recently. First came the release of CPM's Ping Pong Club, and now ADV Films, not wanting to be shown up, gives us Bite Me! Here our source of perversion and humor is Yawaza, a "vertically challenged" high school student who likes to think himself the coolest guy at school (of course, aside from a dimwitted student or two, he's the only one who thinks that). His big-shot attitude is about to run into a brick wall, however, when one of the most well-known true punks around, Aizawa, shows up as a new student at his school. Yazawa, of course, can't simply keep to himself, and becomes the whipping boy of the entire school for our amusement. Comparisons will surely be made between BM! and PPC, and the best that I could come up with is this: BM! is more of a Dumb and Dumber (outright blatant "low-brow" humor), where as PPC is more of a Something about Mary (quick bits of "I can't believe they just did that" humor). One thing that I was really surprised by was how Yazawa is presented to us in a way that, while we think he's a complete idiot, we also can't help but like the guy - and here I was expecting to simply be annoyed by him. I certainly got a kick out of BM!, in that "guilty pleasure" sort of way, but I can safely say that I have now seen more than enough urination jokes in an anime to last me the rest of my life. [heh] And no, I have no clue what in the world the full title of the anime means or has to do with the anime either... - shidoshi

Hurricane Polymar

Adv/Comedy • OAV • Urban Vision • 14+
60 min • Sub | Dub • VHS | LD | DVD **C**

So, this anime is basically neither all that good, nor all that bad - just a sort of average title, right? Well ... no. So why the "C" grade then? I'll be happy to tell you (since, will, it IS my job). If you've ever seen any of those wonderful "boy gets super-techno suit which lets him fight evil mutant beings when he puts it on," be them either the real movie type or the anime type, then you know the basic storyline of Hurricane Polymar. There's this group that wants to destroy us humans, so a genius scientist is making a suit which will protect us from the oncoming evil and help us defeat the threats to our civilization. All of the suits but one are destroyed, and that one ends up falling into the hands of Takeshi, helper and general lackie to the bumbling private investigator Joe Karuma. Takeshi gains all of these wonderful powers from the suit, and proceeds to beat people up and save the world and all of that other fun stuff. So, what's the deal with the anime? The problem is that it's got two sides to if. If you're watching the sub version, and purchase a copy looking for a serious adventure title, you're going to be horribly disappointed. Besides having some really wonderfully choreographed fight scenes (to give it proper credit), this one stalls out from the start. HOWEVER ... if you check out a copy of the dub, and go into it wanting a totally cheezy movie that you can get a good laugh out of, that is where HP shines. While there is some intentional humor, I've got to think that a lot of it was NOT planned, and that the creators did intend to make this a serious show. But, if you're like me and my friends, and you love bad movies, this one is an absolute recommendation. All of those great old "supersuit" movies (like Inframan, a favorite of mine) and similar fair could never honestly be taken seriously, but were greatly enjoyable if watched for the unintended humor value - the same is true with HP. Thus, my giving it a rating score of "C." Don't get this one unless you're looking for a fun time. Oh, one last thing - I think K.T. Vought does a decent Washu in the Tenchi dubs, but she did NOT fit as the adorable Teru (even with the cheezy dub). - shidoshi





AF DVD Connection

Tenchi in Tokyo: Vol 1

Comedy • TV (4 eps) • Pioneer Anime • 13+
100 min • Sub | Dub • VHS | LD | DVD

Anime A- DVD C+

AF's "Best of the Issue!"

The Anime

A lot of people have slagged off on Tenchi in Tokyo (or Shin Tenchi Muyo!) due to many aspects, including difference in animation style, TiT being more of a humorous Tenchi series, and the characters once again going through yet another "revision." Because of everything bad I had heard, I was both interested in seeing just what this series would be like, and worried that it would be bad like I had heard. Well, personally, I came out of it not only greatly enjoying it, but actually predicting that I'm going to like this much better than the first Tenchi TV series. Is the animation different? Yes, definitely, and if you don't like the cast looking "cuter," you aren't going to like this. Me, I enjoyed the cutesy look of the Tenchi manga series, so I didn't mind the new artstyle one bit. Storyline wise, I'm glad to see the more comical approach, as what we need at this point is NOT yet another halfway-serious Tenchi adventure to sort out and put strain on the already overloaded storyline. And, I have got to say, that I can swear to you that I have not laughed as hard as I did during the third episode's "communications error" scene in a LONG time. Finally, the characters - are they different? This is the part that I was disappointed in; the way I had heard it, this was "Tenchi cast now made into college students," and supposedly each character was to be nothing like they were before. This isn't the case, and only the littlest of differences came out through the first volume. In fact, this might as well be a continuation of either the first Tenchi TV series or the first movie. The large differences are more in the comedy and plotlines of the story, not the characters themselves, so that is where you might have the big issues. If you don't want to see the cast in a light-hearted and playful series, stick to the OAVs and the movies.

The DVD

It's a TV series on DVD .... uhm, I've got to say more? [sweat] It's average, no big complaints, but no where near the best looking DVD. Typical DVD rules apply: good scenes tend to look very nice, average scenes just look average. Production art is included, but no chapter selection from the menu. Doesn't push the medium, but of course better than VHS any day. And where are the English versions of the songs?!? - shidoshi

Grave of the Fireflies

Drama • Movie • CPM • 13+
88 min • Sub | Dub • VHS | LD | DVD

Anime A+ DVD D

The Anime

For any of you who have ever seen Grave of the Fireflies, then my giving any sort of review of the anime is absolutely un-needed. For those of you who haven't, Grave is and forever will be considered a true classic in the anime world. The setting is post-war Japan, a short time before the American occupation, and it is the tale of a young boy, Seita, and his little sister Setsuko. Their mother is killed in a fire bombing, and the two must rely on each other to survive the horrors of Japan in such troubled times. If this sounds to you like the setting for an anime that is tough to watch because of it's emotional content, it is. Grave is one of those movies that is hard to really love, not because it is bad in any sort of way, but because it hits you so violently emotionally and mentally that it's more of a case of "experiencing" the movie rather than "enjoying" it. It's easy to sit back and be behind any sort of war with the "enemy" (just look at the attacks on Iraq recently, which seemed to be little more than just another TV show), but when you get a taste of the human experience from the other side, in this case the Japanese casualties and tragedies, war suddenly seems like the dirty and horrific ordeal that it really is. And I dare anyone out there, no matter who you are, to watch this movie the entire way through and not get a bit teary eyed be it's end.

The DVD

This is where things start to go wrong. I experienced a picture quality of which I've not seen before on DVD; there seemed to be a great deal of "video noise" with the picture, almost exactly like the "standard" video noise seen on a great deal of LaserDiscs (this COULD be an issue with my player, but I've never had problems anything like this before. If I find out that it is, I'll report on that in a future issue). It sure doesn't have the picture quality that I expect from DVD, and that greatly upsets me, but if I just tell myself that it's the LD version with a few extras, I can live with it. Since the LD copy isn't available anymore, I would still recommend the DVD over the VHS copy, quality issues aside, simply because this is one anime that must be a permanent copy of your collection. You won't be watching it many times, but when you do, you'll want to have a copy that you can trust. - shidoshi

NightWarriors: the Anime

Adventure • OAV • Viz Video • 13+
90 min • Sub | Dub • VHS | LD | DVD

Anime B+ DVD B-

The Anime

If releases like NightWarriors: the Anime keep coming along, the idea that a decent anime simply can't be made when based off of a popular fighting game may just become one of the past. One of NW:tA's strongest point, and the factor that raises it above most other fighting game-based anime titles, is that it really does a wonderful job of making the characters "3D," giving them personality and feeling beyond their simple game incarnations. As well, it gives them all a sense of darkness and mystery, without making them come across as "goofy" like they were in the game. This more serious atmosphere comes across in the storyline and settings as well, with the exception of the very last fight scene (which goes a little TOO far). That is one of it's most endearing aspects, as even people who might have been turned off by the game will more than likely appreciate the quality and style of the anime.

The DVD

I'm the type of person who likes my TV contrast and picture brightness set darker than normal, but as I watched NW:tA I keep telling myself that it seemed TOO dark, and no adjustment of the controls seemed to help. In doing a comparison between the VHS and DVD copies, I came to notice that the DVD's transfer was indeed darker: for example, in one scene where the detail of bricks could be seen in the darker parts of a wall in the background on the VHS copy, on the DVD copy this darker area was just solid darkness, with no noticeable brick detail. Beyond that major gripe, the transfer is typical Pioneer quality - good for the most part, with only a few small rough spots every now and then. One other thing, now that I think about it, that rather bothered me was that when watching with the original Japanese language track and subtitles, while you can hear the characters call each other by their Japanese names, the subtitles still refer to them by their more annoying American names. This really isn't a fault of the DVD itself (as the same was true with the sub VHS), but it's still there. Bonuses on the disk include an image gallery, and a section with character info and conceptual artwork. Certainly a nice little DVD set that would have been better with a bit brighter/higher contrast transfer. - shidoshi

GameFan re-reviews Samurai Shodown II, makes NO mention of Shidoshi ... [lowers head in shame]

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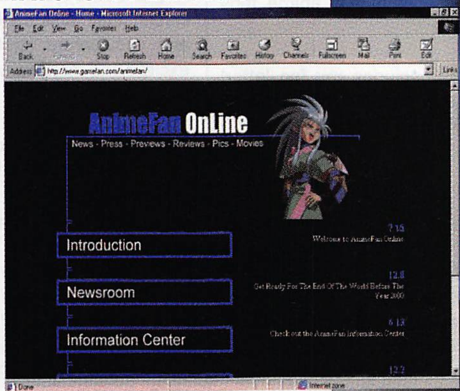
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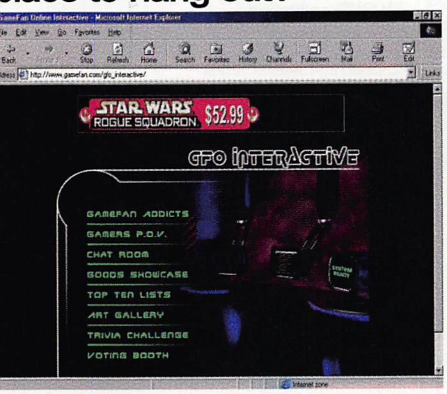
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• AnimEigo's Newfound Love Interest

For a while now, I've been saying one basic idea over and over: I predicted that it was a question of WHEN all of the big anime companies in the US would be supporting DVD, not IF. It wasn't too long ago that ADV Films seemed to have little interest in looking into DVD at anytime soon - and of course, last issue I told you about all of the titles that are already announced as far as coming soon from them. Another similar company was AnimEigo, who has also seemed to be rather unimpressed with DVD. Well, this issue, I'm happy to report that the situation has seriously changed - no doubt thanks to the phenomenal sales of BubbleGum Crisis on DVD. Not too long after the BGC box set hit the market, the statement from AnimEigo was "it's now a question of if we'll do another DVD title or not, it's now a question of what title we're going to due next." While I'm not going to re-print the entire statement on AnimEigo's new opinion of DVD which was recently posted on their website, I do want to pass on one very telling sentence:

While we are still finalizing our plans and scheduling, AnimEigo plans to re-release most of our catalog on DVD in 1999 and 2000.

Just read those words again ... "most of our catalog." [big smile] What was that wish that I had? Oh My Goddess on DVD? I can thankfully now have NO doubt that it's coming (such a big title is certain to be DVD bound), and now I just have to suffer through the however many months it's going to take to get to me. And wait ... does that mean that we're also going to get Otaku No Video on DVD?! Wai! Well ... I'll wait and see before I get too excited and start expecting that one.

There are some other details about this new announcement that are very important: some good, some sorta bad. The good? AnimEigo says that the Lum: Urusei Yatsura TV episodes, ALL of them, will most likely be coming to DVD. Good. Their estimates say that they will be able to get two VHS volumes (eight episodes/approx. four hours) per DVD-10 (double sided single layer DVD) for the same price as one VHS volume. Good. AnimEigo is going to soon be doing a Kimagure Orange Road (TV, I think) DVD collection sign-up on their website.

Good. Where as in the past AnimEigo released their titles on both VHS and DVD, they will switch this practice to VHS and DVD. Good (well, except for those who prefer LD over DVD). AnimEigo will be releasing those titles that were subtitled only onto DVD with the subtitles still hard-coded onto the image: titles that were released in both dub and sub will have both with the subtitles DVD-produced. This is where the announcement is good or bad depending on who you are. On one hand, it's good, because with AnimEigo usually giving a lot of subtitled info onscreen for certain titles, the DVD-produced subtitles would be going nuts. The bad, of course, is that DVD subtitles provide for perfectly unmarred copies of said anime title (since they are machine generated and not printed onto the transfer itself), so this will be seen as a bad point for some. My view? Well ... I have feelings on both sides. I do prefer DVD-produced subtitles, however I do admit to their limitations, and I also understand why AnimEigo would just use the hardcoded transfers that they have for their sub-only titles.

• No Need for DVD!...?

Another big announcement, one on which I've had to sit and not say anything about for a while, is that Pioneer is going to be releasing a DVD box set for the original Tenchi Muyo! OAV series (which includes the original six-episode TM series, considered by many, including me, to still be the best TM series to date). The entire 13-episode OAV run (the Mihoshi special won't be included) will come on two DVD discs (hopefully both dual layer), with a third disc containing a special new "Tenchi Muyo Encyclopedia." This will cover the entire range of Tenchi Muyo products, including the new Tenchi in Tokyo TV series, and the upcoming third movie, Tenchi Muyo in Love! 2. This should be a HOT product for Pioneer. In addition, they will be releasing quite a few other goodies, including a currently planned DragonBall-Z TV DVD collection.

• Rent a Girlfriend

Ever since seeing a horrible quality copy of the first episode long ago (subtitled in Chinese, not to mention), I've wanted to see a US release of Video Girl AI. Well, I never thought I'd see it happen - until now. With Viz now publishing VGAI in their new Animerica Extra (covered last issue), they have now announced they will also be bringing the anime version to the US! Three volumes, two episodes per volume, starting in April! - shidoshi

AnimeFan's Generically Titled Letters and Fanart Section

Ranma 1/2 + US TV?

Kon'nichi wa, Shidoshi-san! I'm glad to see that the AnimeFan section has expanded. It's great! Being a fan of anime/manga and video games, it's a real treat to be able to buy a magazine with info on both in it! The Anime News Service is simply the best... kinda like an "Anime Other Stuff" section.

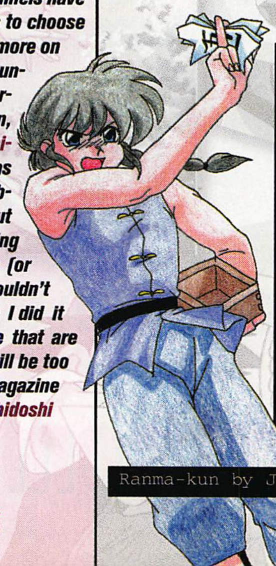
Now I have some serious questions for you. I was looking on the Internet one time, and found a Ranma 1/2 web page that told which countries the Ranma TV series appeared on TV in. Three I remember are France, Italy, and Korea, but there were many others. Well, seeing how popular Ranma 1/2 is in the anime world here, I was wondering why it didn't air here in America as a TV series. Even if it did appear in America on television in any version, no matter how edited, I'd still enjoy it. As far as I know, there is no good reason that Ranma 1/2 isn't on TV in America... right? Anyhow, back to the subject of AnimeFan... I have a suggestion. I think that you should have a small section about any anime specials that air during the month of the current GameFan. Animerica has a section similar to this, but it's basically just a simple listing of syndicated and weekly anime on TV (y'know, Sailor Moon, and DragonBall Z... the stuff true anime fans already know about).

Well, that about concludes my fan letter! Sorry, I understand that it's kind of long. Domo arigato, Shidoshi, and keep it up.
Jessica Nuss

Sorry to hack up your letter so much Jessica, but as I only have six scant little pages here... [grin] While I can't tell you exactly why Ranma 1/2 isn't on the tele in the US, I'll tell you the probably reason why, and it comes down to two issues. The first is that in the US, the anime market is almost totally sales. In Japan, with so much anime being on TV, such options are viable, with commercials and sponsors and the like. In the US, a company like Viz has to pay for the rights to a series, as well as dubbing, advertising, etc., and if they put Ranma 1/2 on television, they would miss out on quite a bit of the much-needed sales of Ranma 1/2 videos. And with anime not getting ratings like a show like Friends or your weekly wrestling show, advertising profits simply aren't enough. The second is that the US is (and correct me if I'm wrong here) the single biggest producer of live-entertainment TV shows and movies. As such, US channels have a never ending supply of bad shows to choose from, where as other countries rely more on television shows provided by the countries know better for televised entertainment (the US, the UK, Japan, etc.). As for your suggestion for AnimeFan, I'd love to do that, as well as a lot of other things. The only problem is that I already tear my hair out every month trying to cram everything that I want to cover into six pages (or five, like last issue [grr]), and I wouldn't want to do such a section unless I did it decently. As well, TV specials like that are often times not announced until it will be too late to do any good putting in a magazine (due to the printing lead time). - shidoshi



Skuld by Jessica Nuss



Ranma-kun by Jocelyn Kiersted

ANSWER: Nausicaans - Named after Hayao Miyazaki's popular Nausicaa.



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Hocus Pocus



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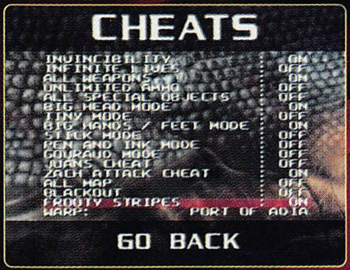
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Glover N64

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Infinite Power - C-Right, C-Right, C-Down, C-Right, C-Right, C-Right, C-Up, C-Left.



Low Gravity - C-Left, C-Up, C-Left, C-Right, C-Up, C-Up, C-Up



Play as Froggy - Up-C, Right-C, Down-C, Right-C, Up-C, Left-C, Left-C, Up-C. POOF, you'll turn into a frog! And every time you eat a bug, you'll gain a life.



Power Ball - C-Up, C-down, C-up, C-down, C-up, C-down, C-left, C-up.

Call Ball - C-Up, C-Left, C -Left, C-Up, C-Right, C-Left, C-Down, C-Up.

Camera Rotate Left - C-Right, C-Down, C-Right, C-Down, C-Up, C-Up, C-Right, C-Left.

Camera Rotate Right - C-Left,C-Right, C-Up, C-Up, C-down, C-right, C-Down, C-Right.



Fish Eye - C-Left, C-Right, C-Left, C-Right, C-Left, C-Right, C-Left, C-Right.

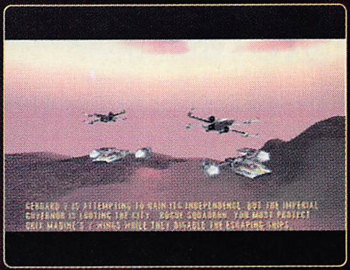
Access All Levels - C-Up, C-Right, C-Right,C-Down, C-left, C-Down, C-Up, C-Right.

Rogue Squadron N64

Jedi Tricks

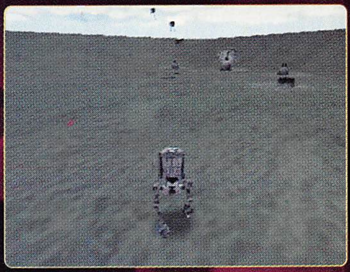
All Power-Ups - To get all the power-ups in the game, go to the password screen and enter: TOUGHGUY

Infinite Lives - For infinite lives, go to the password screen and enter: IGIVEUP



Director Mode - To view all the cut sequences in the game, go to the password screen and enter: DIRECTOR

Music Mode
To listen to the authentic Star Wars music in the game, go to the password screen and enter: MAESTRO



AT-ST Bonus Level - To access the secret AT-ST bonus level, go to the password screen and enter: CHICKEN

Increased Difficulty - Oh, so you think you're some Jedi Knight or something, eh? Alrighty then, enter ACE at the password screen... and I better not see you crying back to mommy.

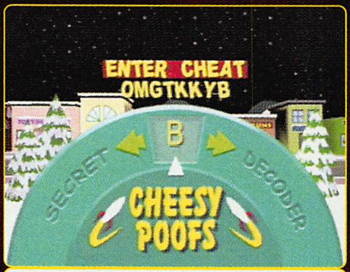


Fly the Millennium Falcon - To fly the infamous Millennium Falcon in certain missions, go to the password screen and enter: FARMBOY



Fly the TIE Fighter - To defeat the enemy, you must know your enemy. To pick the TIE Fighter, go to the password screen and enter: TIEDUP

South Park N64
More Kick Ass Codes



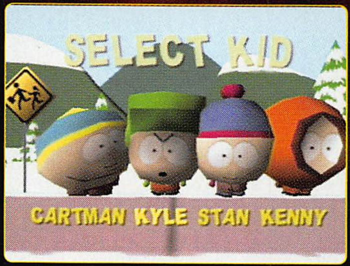


All Characters
To get all the multiplayer characters in the game, you would usually have to play through the game. However, go to the Cheats Menu and enter: OMGTKKYB (which, of course, stands for "Oh My God They Killed Kenny You Bastards") and all the characters will be available from the get-go.



Level Select
To select which stage you want to start at, go to the Cheats Menu and enter: THEEARTHMOVED

All Weapons
To enable all the weapons in the game, go to the Cheats Menu and enter: FATKNACKER

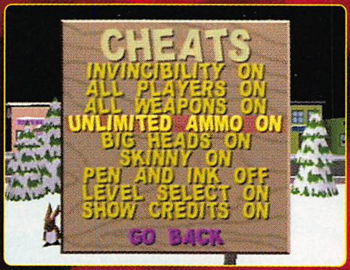


Big Head Mode
To enable the Big Head Mode (I hear you sneering at Dangohead jokes there!), go to the Cheats Menu and enter: MEGANOGGIN



Invincibility
To enable invincibility, go to the Cheats Menu and enter: ASSMAN

Unlimited Ammo
For unlimited ammunition, go to the Cheats Menu and enter FATTERKNACKER



Master Cheat
Of course, you could avoid putting all the following above codes in and opt for the Master Cheat which gives you, oh, everything! Go to the Cheats Menu and enter: BOBBYBIRD

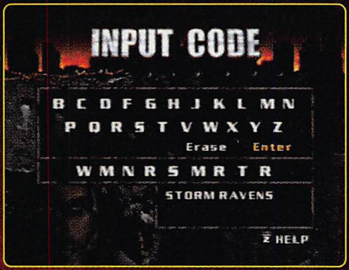
Battletanx N64
Choice of Gang teams

Choose Gang in Campaign Mode
Go to input code, then type in LTSLTS-GNGS. Select campaign mode and you should be able to select your gang.





Storm Ravens Gang
Enter WMNRSMRTR as a password. The all-women Storm Ravens gang, with laser and cloak power-up will be selectable in multiplayer mode.



X Games Pro Boarder PS
Thrashing Ollie B, All Circuits, and mondo!

Getting your butt thrashed by those curvaceous powdery paths? Or are ya getting tired of that weaksauce boarder of yours? Here are some codes that should do the trick:

All Circuits
Go to the password screen and enter the following commands to open all normal circuits:
✖, ●, ✖, ▲, ▲, ■

Super Circuit and Secret Boarders
Go to the password screen and enter the following commands to unlock the super circuit and secret boarders:
■, ▲, ■, ●, ●

Play as Ollie B
To play Ollie B, enter the password screen and press the following buttons:
▲, ✖, ■, ✖, ▲, ●

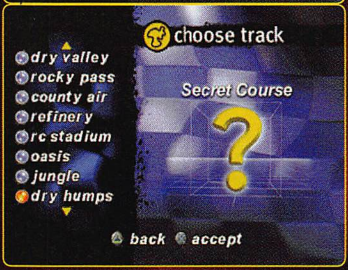
Rally Cross 2 PS
Bonus Tracks, Gameplay Codes

Getting tired of driving in the same old setting? Or do you need a new set of wheels? All the following codes are to be entered by selecting a New Game in Season Mode. Enter the following as your new name to enable these codes:

preall - All normal tracks & all cars except Vapor and Radia
airfilled - low gravity/air gliding
leadshot - extremely heavy cars
mooney - restores the game's physics
incorporeal - no collision detection between cars
moobmoob - All tracks (including Oasis & Jungle) and all cars







Bonus Tracks
elgnuj - Jungle Track from Rally Cross
sisao - Oasis Track from Rally Cross
foster - Little Woods Secret Track
nivek - Frozen Trail Track
mit - Dusty Road Track
kcin - Rock Creek Track
cire - Dry Humps Track
bsirhc - Hillside Track

Unholy War PS

All Characters in Mayhem mode.





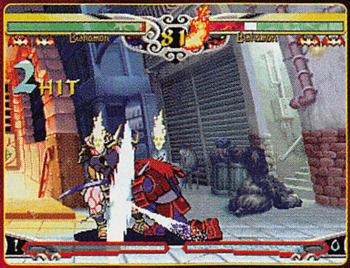


Go to Mayhem Mode and make both teams have all players. Leave it on set teams and enter the following code. Press ● + ■, then press Select, Select, Select, Select, Start, Start, Start, ■, ■, ●, ● + ■. If done correctly, the words "ALL PLAYERS" will be found at the bottom of the screen. This gives you two more characters in your line-up, the Beta Razor and Mega Prana.

Darkstalkers 3 PS

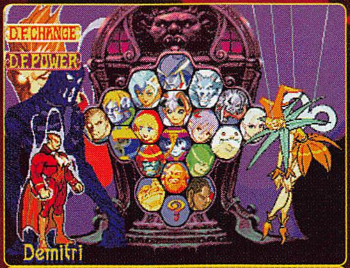
Extra Characters

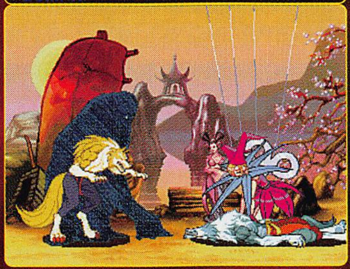
Not getting that bone-chilling sensation from the plentiful lineup of characters? Well, there are a few more interesting character selections.



To play Oboro Bishamon, simply highlight Bishamon on the character select screen, hold Select and press a button. Oboro Bishamon has slightly different moves than normal Bishamon.

To play Dark J. Talbain, hold Select and press a button to select Talbain. A slightly darker shade, Dark Talbain does a bit more damage than his normal version.





Then there is Shadow and Marionette, both of which aren't necessarily new characters. To select Shadow, before choosing your character, highlight your fighter, and press the Select button five times (holding it down on the 5th time). Then select your character, and you'll have "Shadow" following you. Basically, after every person you beat, Shadow will possess them, and you'll control that new fighter.

For Marionette, again highlight your character and press Select seven times (holding it down on the 7th time). Basically, Marionette becomes whatever character you're fighting!

Samurai Spirits PS

Extra Characters

Play as Shiki
To play the double-dagger-wielding woman, at the Character Select screen, place the cursor on the Random Select icon and press ↑, ↑, ↓, ↓, ↑, ↓, ↓. Shiki will appear above the Random Select Icon.

Play as Zankuro Minazuki
To play the boss with the white-hair, at the Character Select screen, place the cursor on the Random Select icon and press ↓, ↓, ↑, ↑, ↓, ↑, ↑.

NHL '99 PS

Cool Gameplay Codes

Enter these codes at the password screen.

STANLEY - View winning movie
GIPTEA - Easy win vs. team England
NHLKIDS - Players and goalies are tiny
PLAYTIME - Tiny players and large goalies
BIGBIG - Big players
BRAINY - Players have big heads
EAEAO - Activates the EA Blades team
VICTORY - View Stanley Cup video

Gauntlet Legends PS

Secret Characters

When your character reaches level 10 you will be able to select the more powerful version of your character by holding the TURBO button down while selecting a character. The Wizard becomes a Jackal, Warrior becomes a Minotaur, Archer becomes a Tigress, and the Valkyrie becomes a Falconess.

Shadowrun Genesis

Graveyard Code Special

As a little something new, every month we'll be featuring Graveyard Codes for the Graveyard Game of the month. This month, it's obviously Shadowrun. If you're getting stuck in this very ambitious game, there's a hidden cheat menu which allows you to access all sorts of good stuff! Go to the title screen, and press A, B, B, A, C, A, B. Start up a game (new or saved), go to your pocket secretary, and scroll down past the Save/Load Game option. There should be a blank space after the Save/Load Game option that allows you the following options:



NUYEN - 250,000 nuyen
SPELLS - Gain all spells available
TEST DECK - Best deck with all programs
PICK SYSTEM - Pick any mainframe
HEAL ALL - Heals your party
+10 KARMA - 10 Karma points
CONTACTS - All contacts
WALK FAST - 10 Karma while walking

Bust A Groove PS

Secret Solo Combos revealed!

Here is a listing of all the secret solo combos for each character. These combos can only be performed whenever your character starts performing his/her solo routine. Completing the whole secret solo routine will amount to BIG points!

Heat:

↑, ↓, ↑, ●
↓, ↑, ↓, ✖
→, ←, →, ●
↓, ↑, ↓, ●



Frida:

↑, ↓, ↑, ●
→, ←, →, ✖
←, ←, ↑, ●
↑, →, ↓, ✖



Strike:

↑, ↑, ←, ●
←, ←, →, ●
→, ←, ←, ↑, ●
←, ↑, ↓, →, ✖



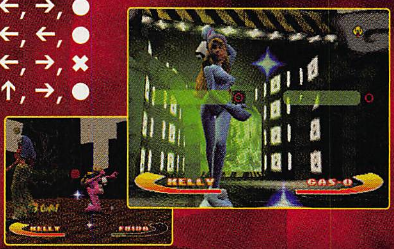
Hamm (also Burger Dog)

↓, →, ↑, ●
↑, ←, ↓, ✖
↑, →, ↑, ●
↓, ←, ↓, ●



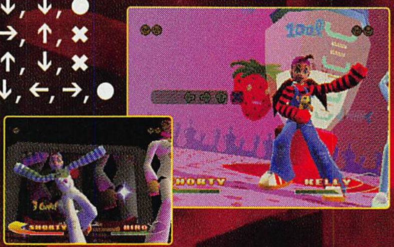
Kelly

→, ←, →, ●
→, ←, ←, ●
→, ←, →, ✖
←, ↑, →, ●



Shorty (also Columbo)

↓, ↓, ↓, ●
←, →, ↑, ✖
↑, ↑, ↓, ✖
↑, ↓, ←, →, ●



Hiro

→, ↑, ↓, ●
↑, ←, →, ✖
←, ←, ↓, ●
→, →, ↑, ✖



Pinky

↑, ←, ↑, ●
→, ←, ↓, ●
↑, ↓, →, ✖
←, →, ↓, ✖



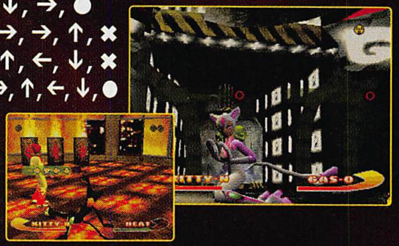
Gas-O

←, ↓, →, ↑, ●
↑, ←, ↓, →, ✖
→, ↓, ←, ↑, ✖
↓, →, ↑, ←, ●



Kitty-N

↓, ↓, →, ●
↑, →, →, ↑, ✖
→, ↑, ←, ↓, ✖
←, →, ↑, ←, ↓, ●



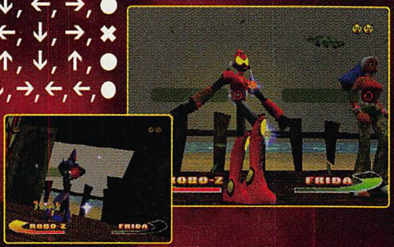
Capoeira

→, ↑, →, ✖
←, ↓, ←, ↑, ✖
→, ↑, →, ←, ●
↓, ↑, ←, ↓, ●



Robo - Z

↑, ↓, ←, →, ●
↑, ←, ↓, →, ✖
↓, ↑, ↓, ↑, ●
↓, ↓, →, ←, ←, ●



GAME SHARK CODES

Cool Boarders 3 PS

Infinite Time and Place First Everytime

8009C694 0000
Extra Characters -
800BD7CC 0015
Extra Free Style Boards -
800BDDE0 000A
Extra Alpine Boards -
800BE010 0003

Abe's Exoddus PS

All Mudokons Saved -
80007E43A 012C
Immune to Gunfire and Fleeches -
801F3618 00B3
No Casualties -
800B4784 0000
Always Invisible -
801F3604 00A0

Rival Schools PS

(All Game Shark codes are for both discs)
Player 1 Infinite Health -
801EFA02 00C8
Player 1 Max Power -
801EFC18 0900
Player 2 Infinite Health -
801EFE02 00C8
Player 2 Max Power -
801F0018 0900
Unlock Characters, Modes, and Extras -
801F65D0 FFFF
801F65D4 FFFF
801F65D8 FFFF
801F65DA FFFF
801F65DC FFFF
801F65DE FFFF

Tales of Phantasia PS

Getting Suzu, Combo Meter

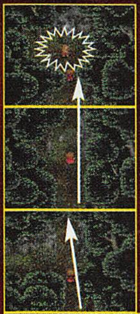
One of the biggest changes in this excellent RPG is the inclusion of Suzu Fujibayashi, the ninja girl. While she was shown in the Super Famicom version of the game, Suzu is now playable, but not till later on, and not until after you satisfy some demanding parameters. Lucky for you, this dango is on the case!





First off, you won't be able to get Suzu until you reach the computer portal which will whisk you away 50 years into the future. You'll automatically be in your former village, renamed Miguel. Make your way north to the large city of Euclid, then east to the seaport city of Venetia. There, find the man (named Harrison) who came from the future (he's in the right-most boat in the harbor). From here, you'll make your way to Volt's Cavern.

In Volt's Cavern is the first time where you'll encounter Suzu. Unfortunately, she doesn't join your party yet... actually, she keeps running away from you! After showing off her formidable abilities, you'll actually help her out of a jam. After this, you won't see Suzu until you get the robotic wings to fly around the world. Finish Volt's Cavern and return back to Euclid. Go back to Harrison's house where you'll finally power up the robotic wings and you'll be able to fly anywhere! So, where the first place you're going to go? Yup... find Suzu Fujibayashi.



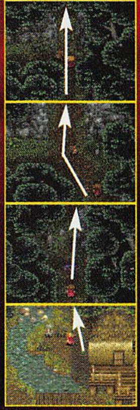
Suzu is located in the secret Ninja Town deep in the Treant's Forest. Head southeast from Euclid till you see a small peninsula covered in trees (this is where the Elf Village is). Make your way into the Elf Village and go straight past it. Here, you'll be in the maze-like Treant's Forest. To get the Ninja Town, follow the path in the following screenshots (you basically want to head in a northwestern direction). Eventually, you'll see Suzu in a dead end. Go up to her, and she'll teleport you into the Ninja Town. Here, talk to Suzu's grandfather who will inform you of an evil spell that has affected many ninjas in the village. After a riotously funny sequence, you'll want to exit the Ninja Town and head back to Euclid.



















Once back in Euclid, head into the Coliseum (the entrance is inside the castle) and enter the fight. After fighting eight enemies (the 8th being a turquoise landshark), you'll face two ninjas from the village. After your fight with them, Suzu will teleport in and a dramatic sequence will happen. After all of this, head back to Ninja Town.

Once back in Ninja Town, talk to Suzu's grandfather again, and FINALLY, Suzu will join your party. While she's pretty weak in the beginning, her combo ability allows you to rack up the numbers when it comes to hits. Speaking of combos...







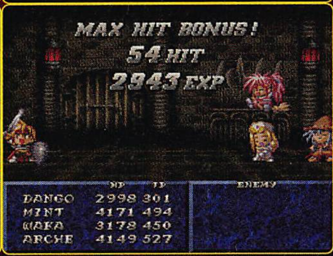
Combo Counter

This item was featured in Tales of Destiny but never in the original Tales of Phantasia for the Super Famicom. But of course, the Combo Counter makes an appearance in ToP and surprisingly, it's a lot more affective in Tales of Phantasia than in Tales of Destiny. Once you have the Combo Counter, make sure to go to your options, and turn the Combo Counter on. Once done, the computer will tally up the number of hits your party combos. The higher the number of hits, the more EXTRA experience points you'll get!









Sonic Adventure DC

Super Sonic, A-Life Guide



YES, HE EXISTS! In order to get Super Sonic, you have to beat the game with every character. Then, when you go back to the character select screen, you'll see a seventh "?" option for Super Sonic. However, to actually see Super Sonic in action, you'll need to do a number of things first.

First off, when you start the game, you'll see a rather long cinema involving Chaos, Dr. Eggman, and Knuckles. After this, you'll see Sonic getting up from a nap in the



Mystic Ruin area. Head to the cave that was formed by the explosion earlier in the game (when you take the subway from Square Station to Mystic Ruin, it will be to the right). Go through the tunnel and head towards the crystal shrine by crossing the





wooden bridge. Here, go to the back of the shrine where you'll activate a



very long cinema explaining a wealth of information (no, I won't spoil it for you guys). After this cinema, head back to the main area of Mystic Ruin and head toward the mine cart next to the waterfall. This will trigger another cinema (get the pattern here?) which will finally initiate







SUPER SONIC! You will battle Perfect Chaos in the final apocalyptic battle (with chants of "SONIC!" in the background). GOOD LUCK!

A-Life/Chao Guide

One of the cooler (yet harder to understand) features in the game, here's a little starter's guide for those people wondering what the hell this A-Life stuff is.

First off, to make an A-Life, you have to find an egg. At the very start of the game, there are 3 places that you'll be able to get Chao eggs:

1) Station Square - In the main Chao garden of Station Square, there are 2 eggs waiting to be hatched. Enter the hotel (the one that leads to Emerald Coast) and take the elevator. You'll automatically end up in the Chao garden here.

2) Mystic Ruin - Like Station Square, the main Chao garden in Mystic Ruin also has eggs waiting to be hatched. In addition, the waterfall behind Tails' House will dispense eggs into the lake. Press the large button on the wall near the waterfall for an egg to be dispensed. The egg will float to land where you can grab it.



3) Egg Carrier - There's a black egg in the sequence where you play Amy. In a scene where E-102 frees you, there's a Mallet-the-Mole game which, if you win, opens a door. The main Chao Garden on the Egg Carrier is kind of tricky to find. When you're up on top of the Egg Carrier, go to the back section of the ship. You should find a circular elevator which sends you down into the ship. Once inside the ship, you should see a staircase which leads to a bunch of letter icons. To open the door, you'll have to step on each one and spell "EGGMAN". Enter the opened door where you be transported to the Chao Garden.

Now, once you've found these Chao Eggs, you'll need to hatch them. Pick up the egg using the Y button, and while running, press the Y button while holding the egg. Your character will hurl the egg and upon breaking {POOF}... there's your Chao!

So, what to do with your newborn Chao? First off, you'll need to let it absorb some of the animals you've saved throughout the game. There should be a bunch in every Chao Garden, provided you destroyed Dr. Eggman's lackey troops throughout





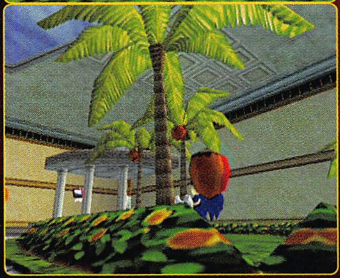


each level. Pick up an animal and put it in front of a Chao. It will start absorbing the animal's abilities, dependent upon what kind of animal it is. For example, place a rabbit in front of a Chao, and it will



gain stronger running abilities. Or if you want a Chao that has better power, try putting a Gorilla in front of an A-Life. An A-Life can only absorb the abilities of two animals, so choose wisely!





Taking care of A-Lifes
You'll need to treat your Chao's right if you want them to grow up strong enough to win some Chao races! First off is feeding a Chao. In each of the Chao Gardens, there are coconut trees. Wait for the coconuts to be ripe, then stand in front of the tree, press the Y button, and start moving the Analog Pad in order to shake some coconuts off. When they drop, pick them up and place them in front of your A-Life creatures.



Typical example of an unhappy A-life. Geez, listen to that pathetic wail!

Sometimes, as you pass by Chao, it will pick up its arms and start screaming in utter cuteness for attention. What to do? Well, it's time to go rock-a-bye baby... pick up the Chao with the Y button, and hold the Y button while rocking the Analog Pad back and forth. You'll perform a cradling motion that will effectively soothe any A-Life. Too cute for you to stand? Oh just you wait...





Chao racing
Oh boy, now this is over-the-top fruity. In each of the Chao Gardens, you can place any of your saved A-Life or A-Lifes at the station in four different races. These races include





the Pearl Race (Ball Pushing then Sprinting), Amethyst Race (Basic Foot Race), Sapphire Race (mostly running with light flying and swimming elements), and Ruby Race (Swimming then Sprinting). Some attributes are better tuned to different races, so know what your Chao is capable of





before sending him into the wrong race. Once you've place your Chao in a race, it races on its own accord. However, once every so often sparkles



will surround your Chao. When this happens, press the Y button to give your Chao a short-lived burst of speed. If you manage to win a race, you're awarded with more Hit Points for your A-Life and maybe even a Sonic Token!



Street Fighter Zero 3

Hidden options and characters!

As spectacular as this game is by itself, it's loads more fun with all the hidden options and characters in the game. So with little introduction, here they are:







Play Shin Gouki

To play Shin Gouki, play through World Tour Mode with any character, and build up your fighter to Level 32. At the end of the tour, you'll see a location near Japan where you'll fight a bunch of Goukis before facing Shin Gouki himself. Shin Gouki is one son of a mongrel, but once you beat him you can select him in any mode. Simply highlight Gouki at the character select screen, press and hold L2, and select Gouki.





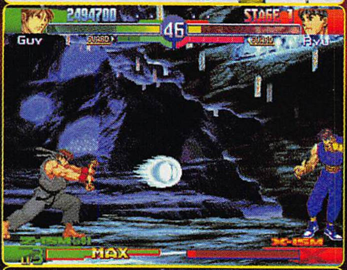




Guile

He's back people! In order to play Guile, play through World Tour Mode with any character and build up your fighter to Level 30. There will be a location in the western United States where you'll first battle a number of Rolentos, Nash (who must be Guard Broken to be damaged) then finally Guile. Once you beat Guile and finish World Tour, he'll be selectable.







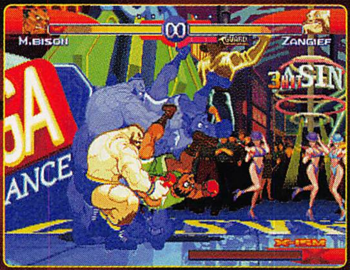


Evil Ryu

To play the darker side of Ryu, again play through World Tour mode with any character and build up your fighter to Level 31. There will be a location again near Japan, where you'll first face classic Ryu, two power Z-ism Ryus, and finally Evil Ryu. And yes, after you beat him and finish World Tour, he'll be selectable in the character select screen.

Shin Bison (Balrog in the US)

To play a slightly different version of Bison, play through World Tour Mode with Evil Ryu and simply beat the World Tour Mode at any level. Now, go to the character select screen, highlight Bison, press and hold L2, and select Bison.



Extra ism modes

After you play SFZ3 for over 3 hours, the extra ism modes will open up. To be sure, go to the Options menu and look at the timer in the lower right hand corner. The 3 modes are Classical (no ism..SSF2), Saikyou (low guard meter) and Mazi.



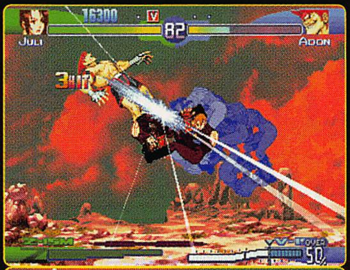


Team Battle and Survival Mode

Both Team Battle (which allows for a KoF style of play) and Survival Mode will open up after you beat World Tour mode with any character on any level.

Dramatic Battle and Final Battle Mode

To open up Dramatic Battle (the team-up battles with Ryu & Ken, or Juli & Juni) and Final Battle (fight the boss right away) mode, you have to beat






Arcade Mode on Level 8 Difficulty. Once Dramatic Battle Mode is opened, beat Dramatic Battle Mode with both the Ryu & Ken team and Juni & Juli team to open up two more dramatic modes. The first dramatic mode allows you to play two of the same characters of your choice. The second dramatic mode, you pick one character of your choice while the computer picks your partner.

Alternate Pre-fight Openings

Different characters will react accordingly to certain matchups. The following is a confirmed list of just some of the pre-fight openings in the game.



Evil Ryu Vs Shin Gouki

Both Evil Ryu and Shin Gouki attempt their Raging Demon Super at the same time. The screen goes while and hit sparks fly. Then both get knocked back (looks like they were Guard Crushed.



Gouki Vs Gen

Gouki attempts to perform his Raging Demon but Gen counters and tries his Forward Rush (Zan'ei) which Gouki blocks.



Ken Vs Ryu

Ryu is stuck in a headlock by Ken, while Ken noogies Ryu. Then Ryu finally breaks out and tosses Ken, who lands on his feet.



Cody Vs. Guy

As both characters come on screen, stacks of oil drums appear on the screen. Cody uses his Criminal Upper to hit the oil drums down, while Guy uses his Senpuu Kyaku to break the surrounding oil drums. Food falls from one of the oil drums near Guy (just like in Final Fight).



Vega (M. Bison in the US) Vs Cammy

As the fight starts, Vega gestures at Cammy with his glowing hand.

Ryu Vs Sagat

Sagat's scar glows as Sagat places his hand on it and chuckles.



Sakura Vs. Dan

Dan rolls on screen with his taunt, while Sakura scratches her head ("As IF!" attitude).

Many more in next issue!

World Tour: ISM Plus

While playing World Tour Mode, you'll gain different abilities that you can fit in your manner of playing style. Each World Tour character has three block spaces allotted to the ISM Plus modes. Below is the list of all the ISM Plus modes you have available:

Air Guard - X-ISM characters can block in the air.

Auto Guard - Umm...block automatically, brainiac (provided you don't move).

Damage Plus (requires 2 blocks) - Makes character dish out more block damage to a blocking opponent.

Gauge Plus - The Super Meter automatically recharges itself.

Guard Power Plus - Increase in damage to the Guard Meter of a blocking opponent.

Hard Body - Character cannot be dizzied.

Infinite Guard - No Guard Meter (for both players tho =( )

Original Combo (requires 2 blocks) - Character can use Custom Combos in X-ISM and Z-ISM modes.

Super Guard (requires 2 blocks) - Character takes no block damage from any moves.

Super Zero Cancel (requires 2 blocks) - Characters can cancel a special move into a Super move.

Zero Cancel (requires 2 blocks) - Characters can cancel normal moves that don't combo into special moves.

Zero Combo (requires 2 blocks) - Allows chain combos

Zero Counter Plus - Increase damage to Zero (Alpha) Counters.

The Last Blade 2

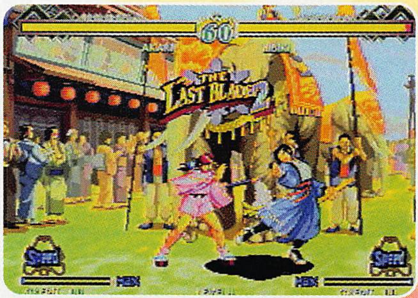
QUARTER CRUNCHERS

WHAT DO YOU MEAN YOU















With the advent of *Samurai Shodown 64*, many purists (like myself) abhorred SNK's decision to make their glorious swordfest series a 3D fighting game. In a way, SNK has always honored all hardcore fighting gamers with lovely 2D graphics and fun gameplay to boot. And I know a lot of gamers out there who felt betrayed by the switch from incredibly animated 2D sprite grandeur to 3D polygon-pushing visuals. Would SNK jump to the 3D realm, forsaking all the 2D art which started all video gaming in the world? Would we ever see another swordfest in the hand-drawn realm?

Of course we would... which brings us to *Last Blade 2*, SNK's sequel to a game many considered to be even better than the *Samurai Shodown* games. Yes, even this dango is skeptical of such a lofty claim, but after hours upon hours of slamming down opponents right and left, I am extremely impressed with *Last Blade 2*.

Showing seeds of growing popularity, *Last Blade 2* is to *Last Blade* what *Samurai Shodown 2* is to *Samurai Shodown*. Three new characters are added to the cast for a total number of 15 normal characters (yes Timmy, there are secret characters). Characters range from the diminutive Akari to a Jet-Li ripoff named Recca and the "HULK SMASH EVERYTHING" Shigen. The cast of characters is extremely varied, so you'll find someone you can attach to. And just like the first one, you can choose between Speed and Power modes for your character. For those that haven't played the first one, Speed Mode allows your character to chain almost all sorts of hits together while sacrificing damage, and of course, Power Mode increases the amount of damage you can dish out while sacrificing the combination ability of Speed Mode.

Graphically, this game is like a nice hybrid mix between *King of Fighters* and *Samurai Shodown* - not as zany or as extreme in its visuals as *Samurai Shodown*, but a bit more flashy than the *King of Fighters* series. Backgrounds are nicely detailed and animation is very good. Special moves have both great special effects and complete originality whether it's summoning a centipede (Akari) to sending off turtles to do your bidding (Okina), the mix of crazy special moves with a good fighting engine, makes for extremely fun play. So if you're diehard fighting gamer who has a nervous twitch for 2D fighting games, they don't get much better than *Last Blade 2*. ***Dangohead***





The Last Blade 2

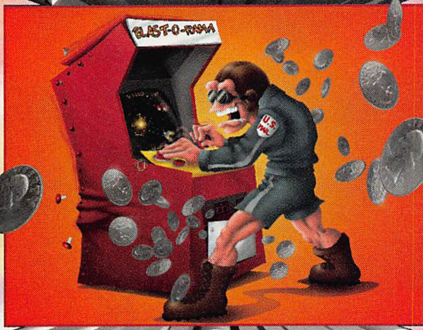
Shock Troopers 2nd Squad

DON'T KNOW WHO SNK IS?

QUARTER CRUNCHERS







While people will invariably cite SNK for being a fighting genre monster, sometimes we forget that this is the same company responsible for Metal Slug and Metal Slug 2, which many of us at GameFan consider to be the greatest series in the action genre. Well, those non-stop action fiends at Saurus have done it again with their sequel to *Shock Troopers*. *Shock Troopers 2* is one helluva ride and when it comes to action games, they don't get much better than this.

Select one of four characters as you must diffuse a terrorist action before time runs out... okay, so story takes a backseat in all action games. The four characters have different abilities in strength, speed, and durability. After that, it's just action, action, and... oh yeah MORE ACTION! Attacking opponents can be done either from shooting them from far away, or getting up close with a knife. Opting for close-in attacks will give you more powerups, so the game wants you to get up and close to your opponents. And let's not forget some new-fangled vehicles to increase the trail of bodies you leave behind.

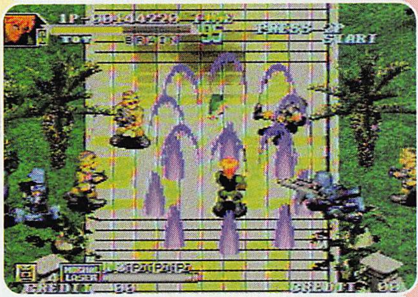
Shock Troopers 2 receives a new style in the visuals department from the original. While *Shock Troopers* reminded me of those cool days playing SNK's *P.O.W.*, *Shock Troopers 2* ops for the spritely rendered look, with all the characters being having a short roundish look. But don't be fooled into thinking this is some cutesy action game... this is a man's action game in the same sense as *Metal Slug*. Enemies will charge at you, fly in from above, and attack you at all sides... just the kind of chaos good action games need and what I've come to expect from SNK.

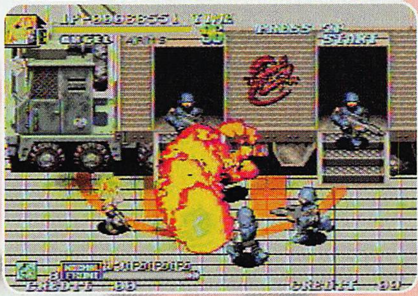
And while this might be a destroy-all-fest, if you don't watch your step, you'll be gunned down like a fugitive. So many enemies and projectiles come your way, you'd better make use of the evasion button to avoid most of these dangers. Of course, the luck isn't always against you as you'll get to control various vehicles with a heavy duty punch. And if you think things get easier if you play two players... think again.

While there can be slowdown at times (due to the sheer number of enemies, projectiles, and explosions), *Shock Troopers 2* rivals even the might of *Metal Slug 2*... and if that's not saying enough, then I don't know what is. Simply put, if you're looking for a great arcade action game that'll make you sweat, you better bring a whole lot of towels for *Shock Troopers 2*. ***Dangohead***













Shock Troopers 2nd Squad

MIYAMOTO TO SPEAK AT THIS YEAR'S GAME DEVELOPERS CONFERENCE:

Nintendo fanatics take note (Teeter is salivating): Shigeru Miyamoto will be the main keynote speaker at this year's Game Developers Conference!! What makes this all the more exciting is that this will be his first public appearance since the release of *The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time*, which broke all sales records over the holiday season (hmm, didn't see that one coming). It's a sure thing that he'll chat about his experience with designing *Zelda*, as well as his philosphy about creating games. The Conference will be held in the San Jose Convention Center on March 18, around 6:15 pm.

ZELDA OUTDRAWS HOLLYWOOD MOVIES!

Everyone knew it would be big, but nobody knew just how big. Nintendo's newest *Zelda* title didn't just out-perform its competition, it out-performed Hollywood! That's right, history has been made by Nintendo as *The Legend of Zelda: OoT*, in just the last 6 weeks of 1998, grossed more revenue than any movie that was playing in theatres. With over 2.5 million copies sold, *Zelda* had an estimated $150 million take, easily eclipsing its nearest movie counterpart, Disney & Pixar's *A Bug's Life* (which generated an estimated $114 million). Some may balk at the idea of comparing different entertainment mediums, but when you consider that a mere 15 years ago the gaming industry was almost non-existent, numbers like this show just how far gaming has come. The sky's the limit!

MAGIC, MEET PIKACHU: POKEMON TRADING CARDS!

They've conquered Japan, they've taken over the US. Toy stores, KFC, even television have all fallen before them. So what's next for the *Pokemon*? Wizards of the Coast, the largest publisher of trading card games in the world, just announced the offical Pokemon Trading Card Game! Starter packs will be available at toy, game and retails stores throughout the US and Canada, including Babbages, Electronics Boutique, FAP Schwartz, Spencer Gifts, Target and many others. Starter packs should only set you back about $8, and will include two 30-card decks, a holographic card, ten damage counters, a gaming guide and of course, the rulebook. Wizards plans on introducing booster and expert-level packs soon after.

SONY TO UNVEIL LONG-AWAITED PS2 AT THIS YEAR'S E3...?

Rumors are flying with speculation that Sony, in a bold move to undermine Sega, will show a working model of their new super-system at this year's E3 in Los Angelos. Unlike the Dreamcast, which used NEC and Power VR2 technology, Sony's new system has been developed completely in-house for optimal performance. Although nothing has been confirmed, it's rumored that the PS2 will be able to push a full 10 million polygons per second (utilizing real-time NuRBS), almost tripling that of the Dreamcast and going far beyond anything even planned for the PC in the near future. Sources indicate that French developer UbiSoft will be the first 3rd-party developer to sign up, and if the original PlayStation's support roster is any indication, the rest will surely follow. Will Sony be able to steal the show this summer?

QUAKE 3 FOR PC AND MAC — SAME TIME!

In a stunning announcement, John Carmack, one of the developers of *Quake* for id Software announced at the Mac World Exhibit in January that the company's newest version of the #1 first-person shooter, *Quake*, will appear simultaneously for the PC and Macintosh. Joining a long list of popular games that have been announced for the Mac (which includes *StarCraft*, *Tomb Raider* and *Unreal*), *Quake 3: Arena* should prove to be the most spectacular first-person experience ever as the focus has been less on flashy effects than on gameplay. Featuring a brand spankin' new engine that requires 3D acceleration, *Q3:A* should start redefining computers later this year.

GOOD JOBS, STEVE!

Most people attribute the recovery of Apple to the deeds of Apple's President Steve Jobs (incidently the founder of Apple way back when, then quit, then came back!). Apple's new iMac system was the best selling computer in 1998 and has been well received by virtually everyone (except ECM...he loves his PC).

RESIDENT EVIL & MEGAMAN FOR N64!

Will N64 owners be able to experience the world of survival horror? Capcom, the 3rd-party developer that everyone wants to be like, is under speculation concerning a new *Resident Evil* game for the N64. This news comes just as the release of *Resident Evil: Code Veronica*, the most anticipated DC game, has been delayed until Christmas of this year. And word is that the Blue Bomber himself, *MegaMan* (aka *Rockman*) will also make an appearance on Nintendo's monster machine. With two of their biggest franchises on the way, can *Street Fighter* be far behind?

Capcom's first N64 title, *Magical Tetris Challenge* (developed by Arika) is out now.

DONKEY KONG 64 SET FOR CHRISTMAS '99

Nintendo has confirmed that the release of their newest game featuring everyone's favorite ape, *Donkey Kong 64*, will be released in time to make happy N64 owners even happier: Christmas '99. Once again, Rare is at the helm to assure that Nintendo's classic star is done justice, as they've done in the past. First revived in late '94, the original 16-bit *Donkey Kong Country* is still one of the best selling game titles in history, and was considered the main reason for the downfall of 16-bit's early next-generation competitors (namely 3DO, Jaguar, 32X). Besides *Donkey Kong*, Nintendo's release schedule includes *Super Mario Party* (256-meg party game), *Smash Brothers* (a fighting game starring classic Nintendo characters), *Perfect Dark* and *Jet Force Gemini*. Looks like another banner year for the big 'N'.

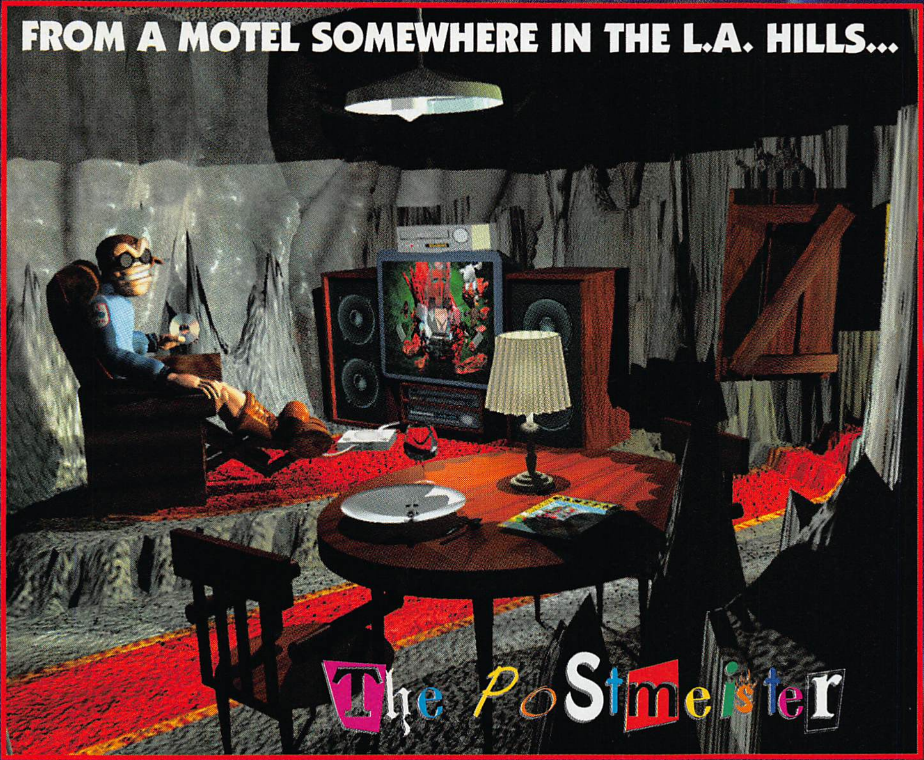
NINTENDO 64 CD ROM DETAILS PLUS NOJ PRESIDENT TO RETIRE

One of the most incredible rumors to surface out of Japan this past month has been the possibility of a new, storage-only device for the N64: the Nintendo 64 CD. But what makes this even more tantalizing is the fact that the DD (bulky) drive is still coming out. Insiders speculate that Nintendo has scrapped the original plans for the DD drive (though working systems have been spotted) and will create in its place a low-cost, storage-only CD rom attachment. Nintendo still plans to have the system offer full-internet access (and optional satellite support as well).

Also, in a story just as shocking, President of Nintendo Hiroshi Yamauchi has announced his retirement from the company by the year 2001. Mr. Yamauchi has also been rumored to have been heard stating that his retirement from Nintendo will coincide with the success of their new system. Whether he was referring to the supposed N64-CD or an entirely new system has not been confirmed as of yet.

CAPCOM-SNK CROSSOVER GAME A HOAX

Not surprisingly, the supposed 'Super Cross-Over' game that was to be a mish-mash of the popular *Street Fighter* and SNK characters has been declared a fraud. The rumors first started when very detailed pictures from the suspect 'game' started to surface on the 'net, and when anything gets on the 'net... well, you know what happens. The much-ballyhooed pictures were created by a student using new software available for the PC called *Fighting Game Maker* (by Ascii) to demonstrate how easily a fighting game could be created. As cool as the possibilty was, we're just going to have to wait and see if Capcom and SNK will ever lay down their gloves long enough to make wishes come true. Hey, it worked for DC and Marvel! Special thanks to Magic Box for the info!



Howdy readers, Posty here. I'm still working out of that durned motel, but I'm adjusting. Finally got the lock off that mini-bar of theirs. Hmff, thought they could keep me out...

Well, the pictures are beginning to roll in. If you, too, want your face in the pages of GameFan, send in your favorite Glam-shot. Sorry, no soft lens shots, please.

THE NEXUS 6 OF MAGAZINES

Dear Posty,

Today, I accidently spilled some soda onto my newest GameFan issue, and to my amazement, the soda just sorta rolled off the page! Has GameFan always been waterproof?

Natt Niensupornphan
kagema@juno.com

Dear Natt,

We here at GameFan Enterprises put our magazines through a rigorous eleven-step inspection to ensure that only the highest quality mags are shipped. Waterproofing is only one of the many measures we have taken. GameFans are flame retardent up to 3 degrees celsius, impervious to severe attacks, verbal abuse and reported to be able to withstand the acidic properties of Mr. Pibb. We here at the GameFan offices pride ourselves in having the only magazine able to withstand exposure to zero G's and intense radiation. How's that for bang for your buck?

[Please don't try any of these tests at home. The staff at GameFan are trained professionals and are not responsible for any of our readers' more idiotic actions]

A DREAMCAST FANATIC, TRULY

Dear Posty,

Let me start out by saying that you are the best magazine ever. I just want to say that Dreamcast is truly amazing. I just got it the other day with *Sonic Adventure* and *Virtua Fighter 3tb*; they both have such mind-blowing graphics, it's not even funny. Please keep bringing us information on EVERY Dreamcast game. I think that with the power of that machine... developers can start concentrating more on gameplay because the graphics will all be incredible. Sega is truly back. I already have mine but I can say that with the launch of *Resident Evil 3*, it will become one of the biggest systems ever. I hope you liked the games I picked; your magazine has the best reviews and high quality pictures. Your job must be pretty cool — you truly are the last true enthusiast magazine.

Thanks,
Taylor Kazemba
Lodi, WI

Dear Taylor,

Let me start by saying thank you. We here agree, the Dreamcast is quite remarkable and witnessing Sonic *and* VF3tb *in action is delectable, but I wouldn't get your hopes up about the quality of gameplay on the machine. The games will look phenomenal, but that won't mean that the gameplay will be any better. In fact, look to see a bunch of titles that totally suck, but have dazzling graphics. While Sega won't release any poor games (we hope) I'm sure there will be many companies that will be satisfied to just put out titles that display stunning visuals but lack gameplay. It happened on the PC, it happened on the 3DO and it happened on the PlayStation (*Rise of the Robots*, anyone?).*

Don't get your hopes up, wither, for a simultaneous Res Evil/Dreamcast launch, either. It would seem to make marketing sense, but you never know...

To answer your last remark, yes, our jobs are pretty cool. Oh, and as an afterthought, it must be cool to live in a town named Lodi. You ever listen to that Creedence Clearwater Revival song, Lodi? Great tune, great band.

JUST PLAIN TWISTED

Dear Posty,

I am a major *Twisted Metal* fan and have a question [don't they always?]. Is *Twisted Metal* going to come out for Nintendo 64? I have seen that commercial for *Rogue Trip*, that looks like *Twisted Metal*. That would be good. Also looks like *Twisted Metal 2* [I'll assume that would be even better]. I have both the N64 and PlayStation. I was wondering if you could send me some codes for *Twisted Metal 2*.

Sincerely,
Jeff Campbell
Stanley, NY

Dear Jeff,

Twisted Metal *fan, huh? Boy, you must have been bummed when* TM3 *sucked. To answer your question, no,* Twisted Metal *won't be coming to the N64.* TM *is a Sony owned franchise and unless some strange deal is struck (by the Devil, maybe) then no cross-overs are on the horizon. Besides, the new* Vigilante 8*, on the N64, is the best out of all of them, so don't waste your time with* Rogue Trip*, either. As for the* TM2 *codes, read an old GameFan Hocus Pocus, cause we ain't in the business of mailin' out codes. Oh, BTW, pay more attention in english class.*

USE YOUR IMAGINATION

To Whom It May Concern [I'll assume he means me],

Hi there, my name's Nikki. I've got some art work here for ya, but I'm sorry to say I couldn't send the originals — they're just too precious for me to let go of. The first drawing, Vegeta, was drawn by my friend Chris Lummings and the drawing of Goku and [the enve-

lope art], my very own creation, were done by me. Well, enough of that; now I'm gonna be pathetic and beg for a free issue, if you decide to put these drawings in your nifty mag. The reason I'm asking for a free issue is because my brother, the jerk, doesn't get your mag anymore. So please at least take this into consideration. Oh, before I go, one question: In the cartoon, *Dragonball Z*, why aren't there any Saiyon women?

Luv ya much,
Nikki Pierce
Magnetic Springs, OH

P.S. Why haven't ya'll ever had *Dragon Ball Z* on the cover of GameFan?

Dear Nikki,

Hi, my name is Posty. I've got some space, in this section, for art. Unfortunately I only put in originals, so you're outta luck. The home audience will just have to imagine you and your buddy's drawings. Have your people talk to my people and we'll set it up so you can have your art sent back to you. A self-addressed envelope would be even better.

Pathetic you may be, but begging won't get you a free issue; grovelling, yes, begging, no. While your brother may be a jerk, it hardly validates us sending you a free issue. Besides, if we send you an issue, then we have to send every Tom, Dick and Nikki an issue; this we cannot do.

As for the Saiyon women and their no-show on the Dragon Ball Z cartoon, I think it's a contractual dispute between the Saiyon Labor Union and the producers of the show. Rumor has it, though, that they producers are going to hire amateur Saiyon women to replace the striking ladies.

Why no DBZ *on the cover? We try to limit our covers to games that are actually good.*

IMPORT SCHOOL FOR THE GIFTED

Dear GameFan:

First of all your mag has got to be the best multiplatform mag out there. It's also the best import mag you can ever find (I MEAN YOU GUYS REVIEW IMPORTS & GIVE IMPORT CODES!!!). That is just too kewl [ebonics?].

OK now to my dilemma. I'm into the whole import gaming thing, well mainly because I love *X-men Vs. Street fighter* and *King Of Fighters '97*, so I'm out desperately searching for a universal Saturn. Because of the fact that I don't know one lick of Japanese, this can become a problem when I'm trying to read the game menus, and every import shop I've been to always says that although you can play Japanese games with a converter, the converter does not translate Japanese text into English. But in your mag, damn near all of the imports that y'all review and give codes to are in complete English. A perfect example is the August '98 issue, in the Hocus Pocus section. The *KOF'97* codes for the evil Orochi team, the screens are in complete English.

WHAT'S YOUR SECRET? How did you do the impossible, I mean all of the import shops I've asked and been to swear all out that you can't do that. PLEASE TELL ME THE KIND OF CONVERTER YOU ALL ARE USING. I won't tell a soul, I promise.

Thanx For Your Time
Alex McLendon
alex-mclendon@worldnet.att.net

Dear Alex,

There is no such thing as a universal Saturn, you have to do a little jury-rigging to get your machine to play import titles. Those who have a clue call it "chipping". As for the text issue, we've been found out! ECM made a trip to the future and bagged us a universal translator so we can present all games in crystal-clear English. OK, OK, so that never really happened...(but wouldn't it be nice?).

Believe it or not, many, many Japanese titles feature scads of English in them. Think of it as 'cool' or 'hip' — kinda like when you see Japanese characters all over MTV and ESPN these days (I'm plannin' on bombin' MTV anyday now over that Sifl & Ollie thing, and Varsity Blues).

So while there isn't anything like a "universal converter" for languages, if you're careful you can find plenty o' titles with lots of English. Capiche?

TECHNICAL MINDED

I was just wondering about polygon counts on these systems. I know the PlayStation can display up to 360,000 polygons (it says on the box) and Dreamcast is rumored at 3 million, but what the heck is N64's? All I know is that the CPU is a custom version of the MIPS R4000 series, and that doesn't tell me much 'cept that it's pretty powerful. Oh yeah, and by the way, this new expansion pak for the N64 — will it... end expansion (well besides DD, but who knows when that'll come out) to its hardware? If you have time to respond to this, thanx a lot, 'cause I'm really in awe here.

hiryu@aol.com

Dear Hiryu,

While we at GameFan hate to quote poly counts on the various consoles — it's never a fair gauge of what a system can do — we can tell you that the N64 does not draw as many polys as the PS (N64 is in the neighborhood of 160k); that's one reason why many games look more detailed on PS than on N64. Furthermore, the estimate on the PS box applys only to flat-shaded (single color) polys which the PS can only calculate and can't even display on screen; can you see the can of worms you've opened? Now the office is covered in the wriggling little beasties...Teeter! Help!

As for future expansion (considering Nintendo's hand was forced by Acclaim on the Expansion Pak) I wouldn't count on it... then again, stranger things have happened—like Frogger on N64 selling about a zillion copies (what was that about?!).

OLD SKOOL GAMER OR WRESTLING MEATHEAD?

Hello,

I need some help. I am trying to find out the name of an old wrestling arcade game from 1985 or 1986. All I remember was that one of the guys you wrestled against was named Coco Savage. Do you have any idea what game this might be? Any help is appreciated.

Thanks,
Jeff Forgue
elforgue@concentric.net

Dear Jeff,

The game you search for is Mat Mania. I'm impressed that you remember that title. Eggo is pleased and has been reminiscing ever since I brought it up. Now what are you doing using someone else's e-mail account? Is that your mom's? Girlfriend's? Partner's?



Here's another GameFan sausage. Adam Salvo (a.k.a Star D), from Connecticut, is a big fan of our mag... and Sailor Jupiter.

Write to me or I'll run for President!

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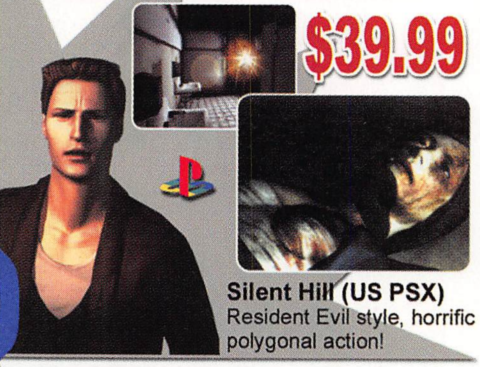
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Macross VFX 2 (Import PSX)
Why you loved the 1st we will never know. Thankfully the 2nd is amazing!

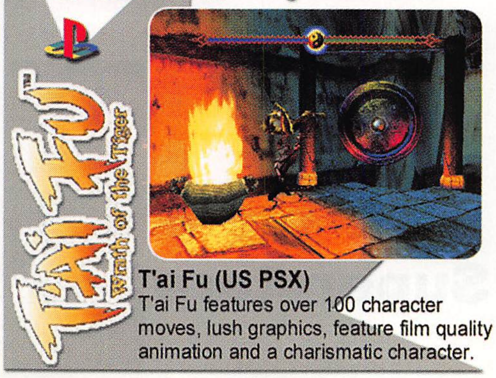
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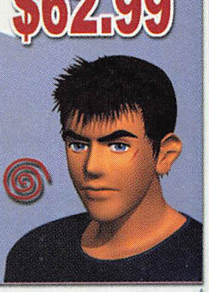
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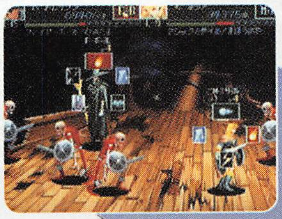
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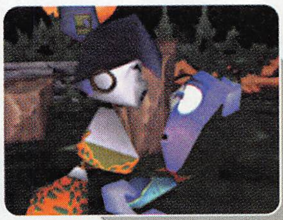
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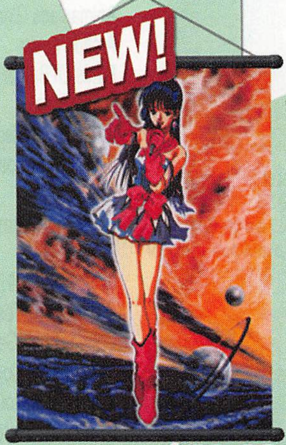
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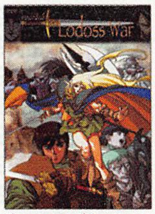


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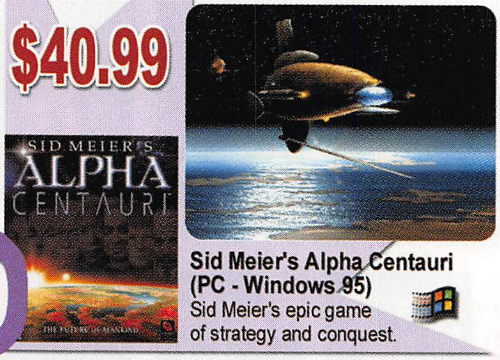
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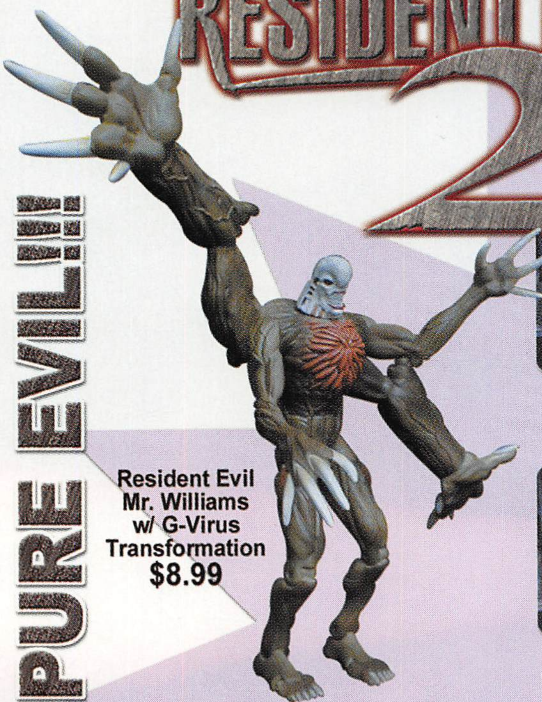
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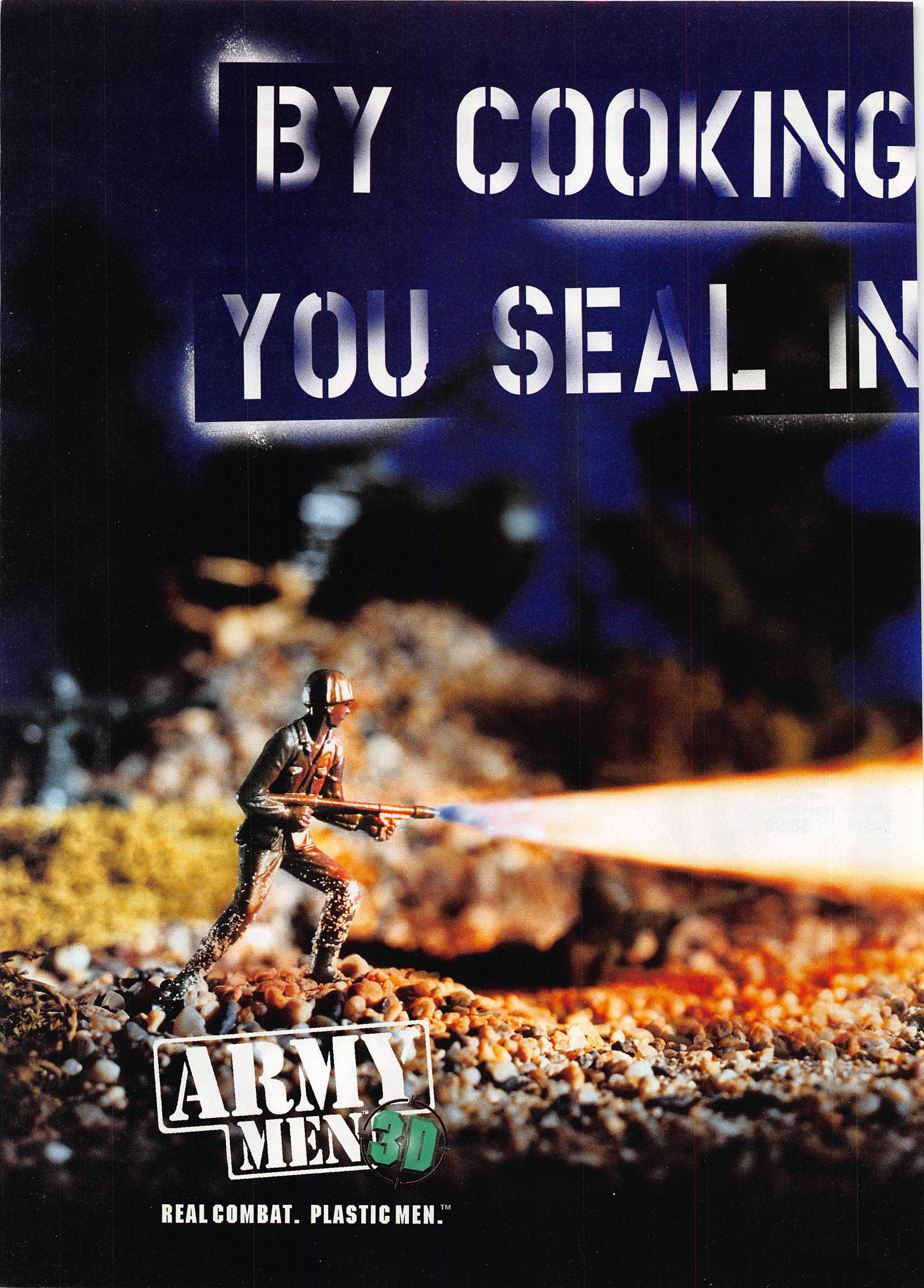


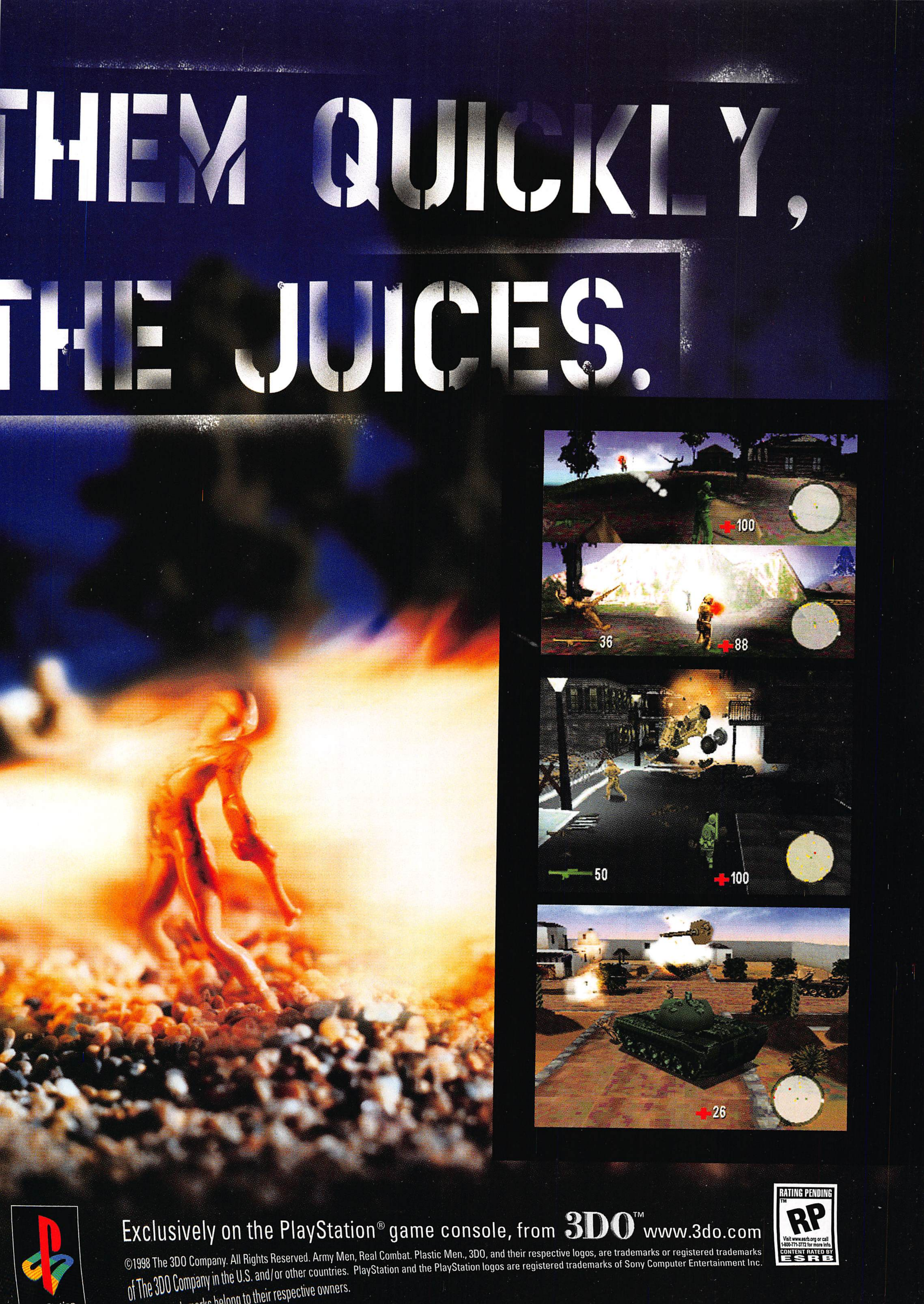
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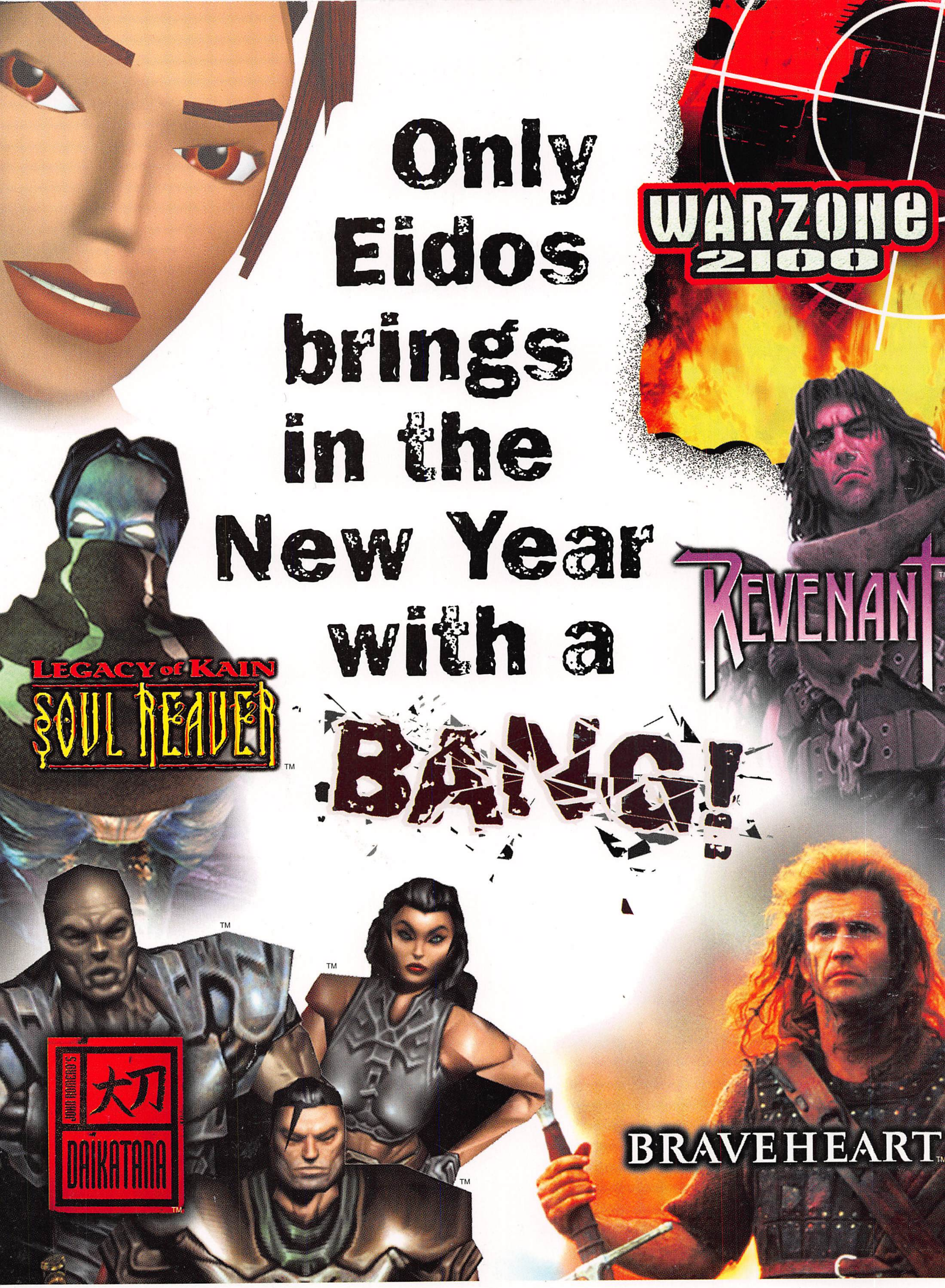
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